

sojourners

August 2015 | sojo.net

Faith in Action for Social Justice

NUKES and the PRO-LIFE CHRISTIAN

70 years after Hiroshima, a surprising new movement is
choosing life by working to abolish nuclear weapons.

PLUS:

The marvelous Ms. Marvel, Muslim superhero

Pope Francis takes on climate change

The gospel according to the blues



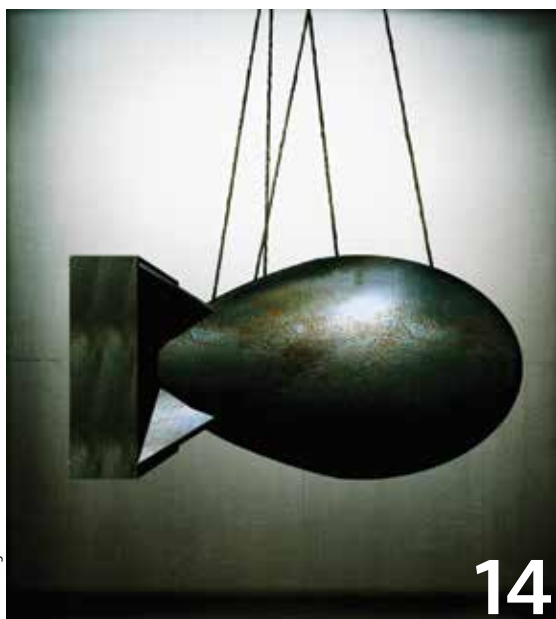
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IN FEBRUARY 1977, *Sojourners* published our first issue on nuclear disarmament. “The physical death from the bomb may come sometime in the future,” wrote Liz McAllister in that issue, “but the spiritual death is obvious all around us.”

Those who’ve read *Sojourners* since the early days know that we’ve long voiced our opposition to nuclear weapons. As Christians, it was clear to us that making, possessing, and using these weapons was sin—a real and imminent threat to the physical and spiritual integrity of beings formed in the image of God.

But for many Christians today, the call to oppose nuclear weapons has neither been



obvious nor urgent. The threat they pose seems remote, an outdated nightmare from a sepia-tinted past. Christian opposition to the bomb lost momentum.

There are signs that’s about to change. “Each one of us becomes responsible for the crime of war by cooperating in its preparation and in its execution,” argues Karen Swallow Prior in our cover story. “Silence, doing

nothing, can be one of the greatest sins.”

While she writes with the same conviction of her 1970s predecessors, Prior hardly seems like a typical anti-nuclear protester. A professor at Liberty University, a school founded by Jerry Falwell and strongly associated with the Religious Right, Prior’s perspective on nuclear weapons is rooted in her pro-life commitments: “All human life begins the same way,” she writes. “Yet there are so very many ways to destroy it.”

For us, Prior’s story is a hopeful sign; if there’s a future for the Christian witness against nuclear weapons, it’s going to require the participation of Christians across the theological and political spectrum. ■

Letters

LUTHERANS DIVESTING

For years, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has had a social statement on environmental stewardship, “Care for Creation,” calling churches to care for God’s creation and hold environmentally exploitive companies accountable. I bought into the ELCA’s social purpose investment funds, thinking there would be no companies included that had caused environmental devastation. Unfortunately, the ELCA hasn’t always put its money where its mouth is.

I’m thankful for “Divest!” (June 2015). And I’m pleased to report that at the recent assembly of the Metropolitan New York Synod of the ELCA, delegates approved resolutions calling for divestment from fossil fuel corporations and calling on the global Lutheran church to incorporate—in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation—a focus on Eco-Reformation.

Rev. Edward R. Schreiber
Saugerties, New York

HOUSING IS NOT ENOUGH

While Verena Radulovic’s “They Saved My Life” (June 2015) tells a positive story about one woman moving out of homelessness, it doesn’t engage the issue of homelessness from a Christian perspective. Many faith-based programs working with people who

It warms my heart to be a part of a glimpse of Jubilee.

are homeless are doing excellent work. For years, I directed a rehabilitative shelter program in New York. Many of us on staff found the Housing First model inadequate. The program seemed driven by statistical outcomes. People could carry on illegal activities in their homes, go to jail, or have their lives shortened by substance abuse and still be registered as positive outcomes. As Ralph Da Costa Nunez (president of the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness) points out, to address homelessness effectively, issues of employment, treatment, and affordable housing must also be fully considered.

Ron Mitchell
New Rochelle, New York

DEMONIZING DRUMS

“A Sacred Beat” by the late Richard Twiss (June 2015) gladdened my heart, until I got to the part that explained how the native drum has been demonized and forbidden in Christian worship. Do these “Christians” not remember how the Hebrews honored and praised God with “flute, harp, and drum”? I am a liturgical dancer and have introduced the drum into my praise dances, but after a couple years, somebody complained and the next year it was forbidden.

Don’t those who object to “dancing in church” remember that both Moses and his sister Miriam danced before the Ark?

Donna Acquaviva
Roanoke, Virginia

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

I was challenged and inspired by Virginia Gilbert’s “Forgive Us Our Debts” (April 2015). My congregation, Columbus Mennonite Church, recently had a Sunday focus on debt forgiveness—in scripture and in our present reality. I invited the congregation to give toward a Jubilee Fund that would be distributed to those among us carrying burdensome debt, challenging our congregation of about 150 people to raise \$10,000 in two weeks. We raised \$25,285 and have mailed checks of \$903.03 to 28 members, mostly young adults. It doesn’t solve the massive problem, but it warms my heart to be a part of a glimpse of Jubilee.

Joel Miller
Columbus, Ohio

Kudos! (or Brickbats!) Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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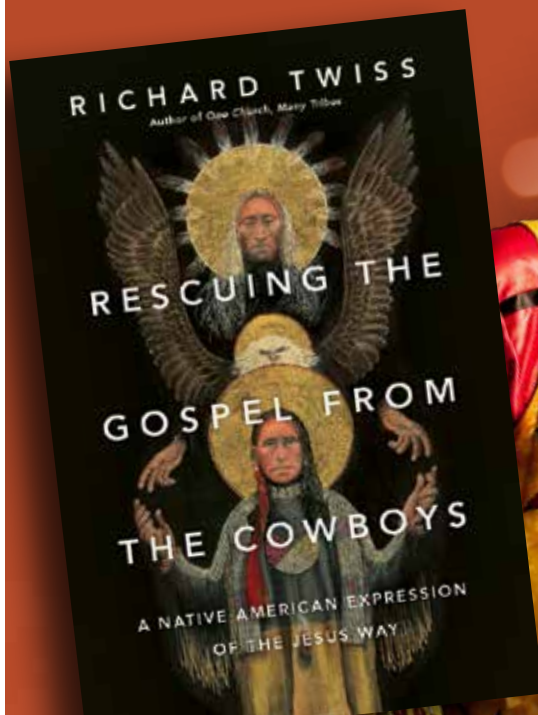
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PROPHETIC WORDS FROM A NATIVE LEADER



RICHARD TWISS (1954–2013)
 Taoyate Ob Najin or
 "He Stands with His People"

"Finally, a book that is refreshingly honest, profoundly spiritual and historically accurate about God's love for the First Nations people from an indigenous perspective! Richard Twiss challenges us to take Jesus out of the box of tradition so we can see and celebrate the wonderful work of God in every tribe and nation."

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BY JIM WALLIS

Hate Breeds Hate



IT'S BEEN A difficult few months to be a Muslim living in the United States. Amid the continuing violence in the Middle East and the polarized debate over the Iran nuclear negotiations, Islamophobia in the U.S. is just about as bad as it's ever been.

While this fear, distrust, and even hatred of Islam and/or Muslims takes many forms and gains traction in a number of ways (as Ken Chitwood explains in his article on page 22), it's important to understand that Islamophobia gains much of its power and attention from a relatively small number of people who have dedicated their lives and careers to perpetuating a distorted, extreme view of what Islam teaches and what most Muslims believe. It is in fact a tragic irony that professional Islamophobes and Islamic extremists such as the so-called "Islamic State" perpetuate and benefit from a very similar and very warped interpretation of Islam.

You can't kill extremism by bombing the extremists.

Both seek to convince the world that many Muslims in the U.S. and around the world either share or should share this radical fundamentalist perspective.

Purveyors of strident hate speech against Muslims and those that embrace violent extremism in the name of Islam actually benefit from each other's existence and actions. The American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) is the group behind the anti-Muslim ads on public transportation in several major cities. This spring, AFDI sponsored a contest in Garland, Texas, where participants were invited to "draw the prophet" Muhammad. The contest was attacked by two radicalized ISIS sympathizers, who were shot dead by police.

Organizations such as AFDI would not attract any following if it weren't for the fact that there are indeed radical extremist groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS that have misappropriated Islam as the justification for committing terrible atrocities. These groups really do seek to radicalize and recruit disaffected young people to their cause, encouraging acts of terrorism in the U.S. and around the world. And this radicalization has in some cases succeeded with horrific and tragic results, such as the Boston Marathon bombing.

Yet just as anti-Muslim hate groups such as AFDI depend upon al Qaeda and ISIS for their own continued existence, embracing the publicity they get for what they claim is a courageous speaking of truth, what AFDI and its ilk fail to recognize is that al Qaeda and ISIS, in turn, greatly benefit from the continued existence of paranoid anti-Muslim hate groups such as theirs. When AFDI puts ads on New York City buses not-so-subtly implying that Muslims are "savages," or reacts to the Charlie Hebdo massacre by sponsoring a contest to draw cartoons of the prophet Muhammad, or announces its intent to publish these cartoons as ads on subways in our nation's capital—all of these actions help violent extremists with their recruiting efforts by reinforcing the false narrative that the United States is a nation full of blasphemers who hate Muslims, and that we are at war with Islam itself.

I AM NOT suggesting a moral equivalence between anti-Muslim hate groups and terrorists—the latter are actually killing innocent people on a daily basis, and need to be defeated for the safety of Christians, Jews, Muslims, and many others all over the world. But

I am suggesting that AFDI needs to understand that its actions are in no way helping to "Defeat Jihad," as one of its ads puts it. In fact, while AFDI and its allies have been known to label those who denounce them as cowardly, or even as appeasers or enablers of violent Islamic fundamentalism, professional Islamophobia's own twisted symbiotic relationship with violent Islamic extremism reveals it as the one doing the enabling.

It is inexcusable that two men who bought into ISIS' warped worldview would seek to inflict death on the participants in the caricature contest in Texas. But it is possible to ascertain the shooters' motivations even as we condemn them. They were deliberately incited to violence by the actions and ideology of ISIS, but also by the actions and ideology of the professional Islamophobes at AFDI. The responsibility for the deaths of these two men, and the wounding of the security guard, should fall not just on the shooters, but also on the hateful ideology on both sides that set them on their destructive path.

As in many other areas of culture and politics, extremes often need each other, as is happening here. Extremists often think like each other and prefer confrontation as their modus operandi. Religious fundamentalism, in particular, is best defeated from within, rather than from the outside.

You can kill extremists, but you can't kill extremism by simply bombing the extremists, which often leads to consequences that promote more extremism. Overcoming terrorism is complicated and very difficult, but the promotion of hate toward people of any religion will always make matters worse. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

Stefan Heunis/AFP/Getty Images



A Matter of Dignity

In many parts of the world, low-income women and girls cannot afford commercial menstrual hygiene materials. As a result, these women and girls use unsanitary materials—old rags, newspapers, ashes, socks—risking poor hygiene and infection, or else are forced to stay home from work or school. But local NGOs are finding sustainable solutions, such as the panties with reusable sanitary pads made in this factory in South Africa, allowing young women to continue their work and education with health and dignity.

By Annika Spalde

All in the Same Boat

More than 90,000 migrants have crossed the Mediterranean Sea so far this year.

SINCE JANUARY, more than 1,750 migrants have died or gone missing in the Mediterranean Sea. That is more than 30 times higher than during the same period last year, according to the International Organization for Migration. The United Nations estimated that, as of the end of May, 90,000 migrants had come across the Mediterranean into Europe so far in 2015.

Last summer, Christian Peacemaker Teams, an international NGO that places unarmed intervention teams in situations of conflict to reduce violence, launched CPT-Mediterranean on the Greek island of Lesbos to support migrants arriving by sea. I served with that team and heard survivors' stories firsthand. So what is going on?

Eleven million people were displaced by violence last year, according to *The New York Times*, most driven out of Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. However, tens of thousands are also pushed north from sub-Saharan Africa, fleeing desperate poverty

and violence. It's the worst migration crisis since World War II, according to the United Nations.

In the past, most migrants into the European Union came by land. In Greece, they entered along the border with Turkey. In 2012, Greece built a fence along the Turkish border to stop migrants and refugees from coming into the country. This forced migrants to enter Europe along Greece's border with Bulgaria. In 2014, a fence was erected there too, effectively cutting off a primary land route into the European Union. The only route left is across the Mediterranean Sea—monitored by the Greek coast guard.

I talked with many refugees who suffered harsh treatment at the hands of the Greek coast guard. One tactic currently in use is that of "push backs," or collective expulsions. A young woman from Afghanistan, who had just arrived on Lesbos with her husband and 1-year-old son, told me her story.

"We came in a small boat yesterday," she said. "It was our second try. Two months ago we left Turkey in a bigger boat, with around 20 people on board, but after a while a military vessel approached and stopped us. The soldiers wore masks, pointed their guns at us, and kept shouting, 'Who is the captain?' They took our SIM-cards and threw them into the water. The men were separated from the women and children. Afterward, the men said they had been beaten and kicked. The soldiers destroyed the engine of the boat with an axe. We drifted for some hours until the Turkish police came and took us back to Turkey." These collective expulsions are prohibited under Greek, European Union, and international law.

The current refugee crisis is a challenge for all the people of Europe. Many are responding at the grassroots level. In Germany, more than 200 Catholic and Protestant churches are offering sanctuary to refugees, according to the German Ecumenical Committee

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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on Church Asylum. In Sweden, citizens have organized prayer vigils outside the Swedish Migration Board, responsible for deporting asylum seekers, and formed blockades outside the detention facilities to stop deportations with their bodies.

People in Greece and Italy are doing the most because they are on the front lines. In Mytilene, the capital and port city of Lesbos, volunteers have organized a welcome center, called the "Village of All Together," at the site of a children's camp. In summer 2014, the all-volunteer team provided for 600 refugees in a place that had only 80 beds.

Christian Peacemaker Teams will

continue to support the work done to address the migrant and refugee crisis in the Mediterranean, with an emphasis on saving lives. As Thomas Albinson of the World Evangelical Alliance said, "As Christians, we need to avoid falling prey to those trying to manipulate public opinion by inciting fear. ... The truth is that the majority are seeking refuge from terrorists, violence, war, and persecution. They are the threatened ones." ■

Annika Spalde, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams in Europe, is a deacon in the Church of Sweden.

By Rob Wilson-Black

In Korea, Christians Wrestle With Identities

The country's largest Christian churches are asking how to bring biblical social justice to the Korean peninsula.

IN 1900, 1 percent of Korea's population was Christian. By 2010, roughly 3 in 10 South Koreans were Christian, including members of the world's largest Pentecostal church, Yoido Full Gospel Church, in Seoul. The faith has exploded, and so now have the questions.

Each of the past several summers in Washington, D.C., I've met with 50 young Christian leaders from South Korea to dis-

never be the cause of harm.

These rich dialogues with Korean faith leaders set the stage for an unusual opportunity: attending the Global Forum for the Future of World Christianity held on Jeju, the politically contested island off the coast of South Korea. First organized in 2012 by a group of Korean pastors, theologians, and activists, the Jeju Forum is making a decisive move toward leading a new ecumenical

How do we attend to those who are denied justice?

cuss biblical social justice as it applies to their Korean context and perspectives on our shared Christian faith. They highlighted challenges they face, such as confusing financial and church growth with God's favor; the stress that youth face in their ambition for a viable career; and the roles sometimes assigned to women and men in both church and society.

They also posed a critical question: Do you think of yourself as a Christian first or an American first? Out of our deep exploration came three convictions: First, national identity can be a deep blessing, but it cannot be our primary identity. Second, discussion works best without immediately judging our priority lists or our neighbors' lists harshly. Third, the order of our lists should

movement in service to the broader global church. The founding churches include Myungsung Presbyterian Church, the largest Presbyterian church in the world, and Yoido Full Gospel Church, affiliated with the Assemblies of God.

More than 100 Christian leaders assembled in Jeju to accomplish three things: determine how best Korean Christians could serve the global Christian communion; gather Christian leaders from Russian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Southern Hemisphere Pentecostal churches, as well as the World Evangelical Alliance and the World Council of Churches, for conversation and problem-solving; and share ways that the gospel calls us to attend to those denied justice and discuss how best to share

From the Archives

Summer 1972

God and the Rural Poor

THESE [sharecroppers] know the Bible, know some kind of church, know what it means to pray long and hard. They also know in their bones what others talk about and speculate upon: They know and live out “resignation” and “estrangement.” They feel a certain soreness of mind and body. They know what it is to feel cursed by the rest of humanity. They know what self-doubt is, and abandonment. They sometimes wonder whether they are not now, right now, in Hell. Heaven is to them a constant vision—even as water is to a thirsty person crossing a desert.



The wife of a sharecropper in Alabama made that last comparison. She reminded me that her life and Christ's are not unlike, which is not a presumptuous or blasphemous thought for her to have, but rather something for all of us to wonder about and maybe get nervous over, as perhaps Jesus Christ originally intended:

“You have to have Someone who will save you. A man like me works all the time and crosses all over the country trying to get by ... he's going to need the Lord.” ...

In any event, they fight on, the people I have been writing about, and they continue to pray—most often very earnestly indeed. They forthrightly and with not a little desperation ally themselves with him who offers them hope, redemption, and another, sorely coveted chance. ■

Robert Coles was a child psychiatrist and the author of *Children of Crisis: A Study of Courage and Fear* when this article appeared.

the good news of Matthew 25.

Jeju island itself is the center of a call for justice because it is a linchpin in the so-called “rebalancing” plans of the U.S. and South Korean governments for pushing back against expansion by China. Since 2011, Jeju has been not only the construction site for a \$970 million naval base but also the scene of massive civil society protests against it, including by many religious leaders. While this was not the focus of the Jeju Forum, there were opportunities to discuss the issue with the Jeju governor and other Christians from the island.

South Korean Christians are in the midst of their own complicated conversations and battles about church-state relations in a country that has a significant Christian population—but one that's declining among young people. However, church leaders such as Yoido's senior pastor Young Hoon Lee, Myungsung's founding pastor Kim Sam-Whan, and his son Hana Kim represent the past and the future in their work to balance churchgoers' interest in Korean

reunification and issues of women's leadership, as well as more difficult topics such as LGBTQ rights. The young leaders are hungry for a social justice movement in their Korean churches. Sojourners' president Jim Wallis—who has had six of his books translated into Korean—spoke to more than 10,000 people at Myungsung Presbyterian Church and delivered the keynote address at the Jeju Forum this year, bringing encouragement to those seeking a biblical social justice perspective for Korea.

As Korean Christians become financial and political power-brokers themselves, they must ask, “Do we think of ourselves as Koreans first or Christians?” American Christians remain very much in need of the Koreans' zeal for getting this right and influencing us to follow them in such a conversation. The Jeju Forum is one way they are answering: We are global Christians first. ■

Rob Wilson-Black is CEO of *Sojourners*. His trip to South Korea was sponsored by the Jeju Forum.

By Starsky D. Wilson

Sometimes a Week is Just a Week

But then there was the week that hit Ferguson last summer.

PEOPLE HAVE CALLED me a lot of things: Host pastor of the #BlackLivesMatter freedom ride; student of teenage and Millennial activists; leader of a state commission advocating policy change; bail negotiator; street agitator; and militant mediator. Since the Holy Spirit was poured out onto the streets of Ferguson, Mo., and St. Louis in the wake of Michael Brown's death, I've been called and challenged to play these roles—and more.

Yes, I *did* say the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that fell at Pentecost as a dynamic demonstration of God's power to overcome the barriers of language, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual orientation. The Spirit of hope that caused a community once rebuked for its broken dialect to speak with one voice. The Spirit of holiness that enabled a people dismissed for “drunkenness” (see Acts 2:15) to form the first fruits of the church.

We may have missed it because those the Spirit fell on nearly a year ago weren't

wearing robes and stoles, but hoodies and bandanas. They weren't singing anthems and hymns, but chanting what some would call obscenities. They weren't called saints and disciples by the media, but thugs and outside agitators.

But last summer, in the week between Michael Brown's death on Aug. 9 and Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon's declaration of a state of emergency on Aug. 16, the Spirit was poured upon “all flesh” and our sons and daughters began to prophesy. It was a week-long act of the Spirit, replanting a church in resistance for the work of reconciliation.

Swiss theologian Karl Barth discussed three phases of reconciliation in his classic *Church Dogmatics*: the world reconciled to God, persons reconciled to other persons, and a person becoming reconciled within one's self. The diverse social realities of the ethnic Jews gathered on that first Pentecost and the social disparities in life

outcomes and expectancy based upon zip code, race, and ethnicity in the Fergusons and Baltimores of the U.S. today call us to consider a fourth phase: socioeconomic reconciliation.

“Socioeconomic reconciliation” is the removal of gaps in opportunity, achievement, health, thriving, and well-being that exist between groups of people in our nation and world. In the face of myriad breaches of the common human bond and experience, a breakthrough act of the Spirit today would activate and agitate the established church in her ministry: a ministry of socioeconomic reconciliation.

The ministry of socioeconomic reconciliation will require a church empowered with tongues of fire and the gift of interpretation. These tongues must speak with a prophetic voice. But we must also have the heart and capacity to translate the words of marginalized communities into the language of policy, power, and program. This form of reconciliation requires the church to fulfill the vocation of the militant mediator, offering the streets and city hall as much renewal as we experience in the sanctuary.

It is the Holy Spirit that allowed the people at Pentecost to understand one another. This capacity to translate the community’s voice into policy for social change must be universally affirmed as a charism by the church. As Catholic theologian Robert Schreiter reminds us, reconciliation requires spirituality and strategy. When we marry the two, we make history.

As we look ahead to the first anniversary of the outpouring of the Spirit in Ferguson, we will also honor the 50th anniversary of another breakthrough for socioeconomic reconciliation. On July 30, 1965, in Independence, Mo., President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Medicare and Medicaid into law. Exactly seven days later, on Aug. 6, he signed the Voting Rights Act, guaranteeing African Americans the right to vote. Neither of these critical social reforms would have occurred without the acts of a Spirit-led church. What a week! ■

Starsky D. Wilson (@RevStarsky), pastor at St. John’s Church-Beloved Community in St. Louis, is president of the Deaconess Foundation and co-chair of the Ferguson Commission.



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A Model for Higher Ed

IN A BID to relive our traveling days, my best friend from college and I took a weekend road trip to Berea, Ky., to check out a folk music festival. We got to be dancing fools again for one beautiful, moonlit night, imbibing hippie music to our hearts' content.

We also got a heart full of something else—a little thing called the American Dream.

In addition to being home to a cool new music festival, that little holler in Kentucky is home to Berea College. I've stepped foot on more than 100 campuses in my 10-plus years running Interfaith Youth Core. Berea is unique.

Maybe it's because it was started in 1855 by a slave owner's son as an interracial, co-educational school seeking to live out the school's motto, drawn from the book of Acts, "God has made of one blood all peoples of the earth." Maybe it's because the admission requirements include being smart, being willing to work hard, and being poor. Maybe it's because the tuition is free. Maybe it's

Admission requirements at Berea include being smart, being willing to work hard, and being poor.

because all students have a 10-hour-a-week campus job, ranging from office work to janitorial work.

Yes, you read all that right. A man whose family owned slaves took the Bible seriously enough to risk his life to start a college that educated blacks and whites and men and women, together, a decade before the civil war came to a close. Yes, you have to be poor to get into Berea. Yes, there is no tuition. And yes, students in classes with renowned professors such as bell hooks are emptying trash cans 10 hours a week, making a physical contribution to the collective.



Berea students sing at graduation in May.

Berea College

At the local pizza joint, we ran into a white guy with a pony tail and a wide smile. He'd grown up in a Methodist family in West Virginia. His roommate at Berea was a Texan whose father was one of Malcolm X's bodyguards. Now the president of Berea's Young Alumni Association, he spoke of the college as a place that welcomed a wide range of diversity (geographic, racial, religious) and created an environment where people with those different identities could build positive, meaningful relationships.

This was not my first visit to Berea. I've spoken at a couple of the college's convocations, and I'm proud to call the immediate past president, Larry Shinn, and the current president, Lyle Roelofs, friends. I know how hard both of them work to keep Berea going. Providing an education for poor smart kids for free takes an awful lot of presidential fundraising. It's inspiring to note that one-third of current Berea students make personal

donations to the college out of their meager work-study paychecks.

There is something deeply satisfying about returning to a place that believes in its mission enough to live it out. I'll be writing a check myself after this most recent visit.

I'm sure Berea could charge tuition and still get a lot of quality applicants. I'm sure it could say that Christians from Appalachia were its only focus, or that black Muslims from Texas might be smart and nice but they ought to go elsewhere. But then it would not be Berea College.

There is much hand-wringing about both higher education and religion these days—too expensive, too cloistered, too privileged, not relevant.

It is inspiring to bear witness to an institution that draws the best from religion to fashion a model for higher ed. ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about social justice from his perspective as a Muslim American of Indian heritage.



15 MORAL REASONS TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

1.Thou shalt not kill. **2.**Thou shalt not threaten to slaughter the innocent. **3.**Thou shalt not cause unnecessary suffering. **4.**Thou shalt not poison the future. **5.**Thou shalt not hold hostage cities and their inhabitants. **6.**Thou shalt not threaten to destroy civilization. **7.**Thou shalt not abandon stewardship of fish and fowl, birds and beasts. **8.**Thou shalt not put all of Creation at risk of annihilation. **9.**Thou shalt not use weapons that cannot be contained in space or time. **10.**Thou shalt not waste resources on weapons that could be far better used for meeting basic human needs. **11.**Thou shalt not fail to fulfill the obligation to negotiate in good faith for nuclear disarmament. **12.**Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's missiles. **13.**Thou shalt not worship false idols. **14.**Thou shalt not keep silent in the face of the nuclear threat to all we love and treasure. **15.**Thou shalt live by the Golden Rule, doing unto others as you would have them do unto you.

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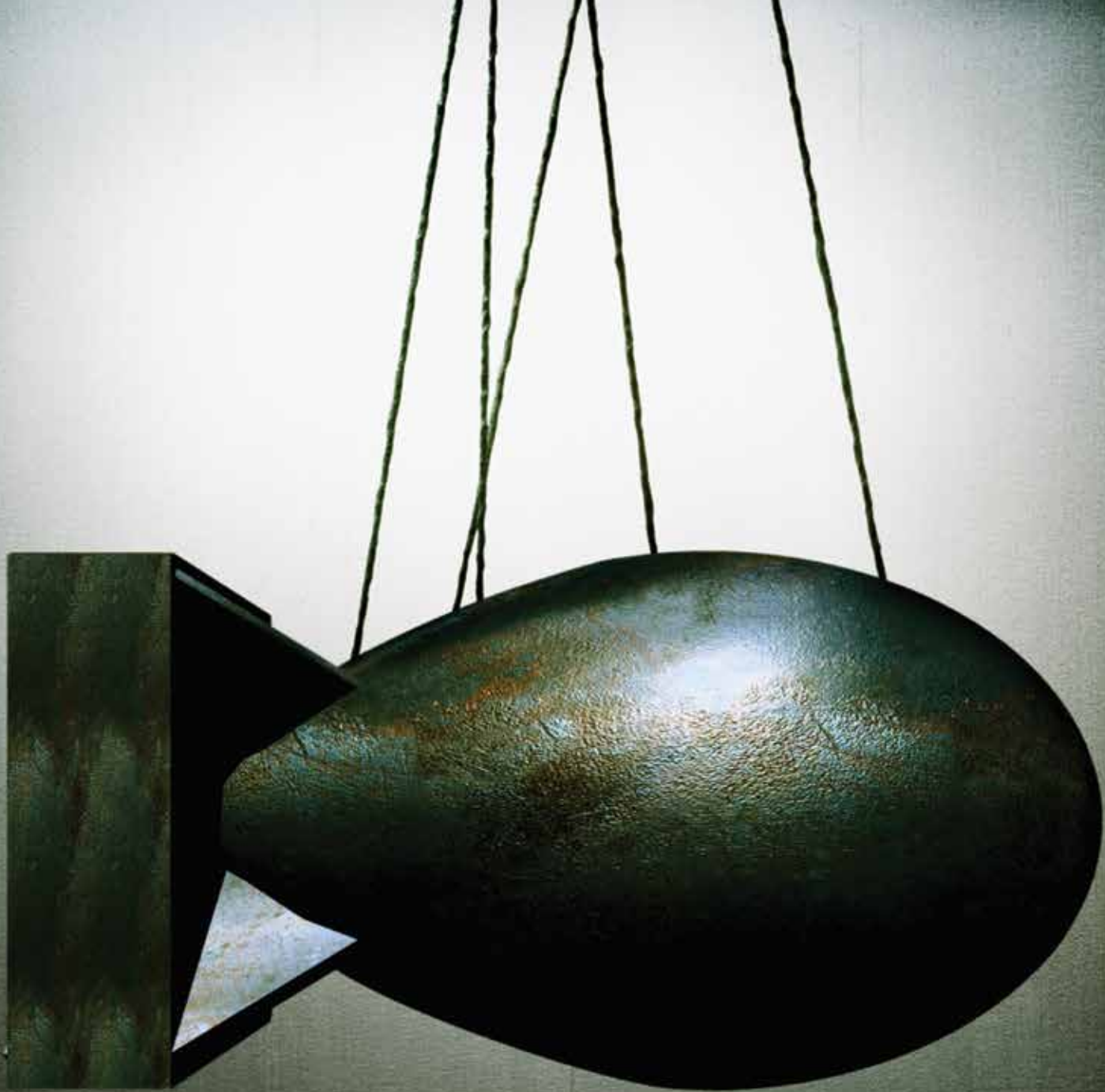
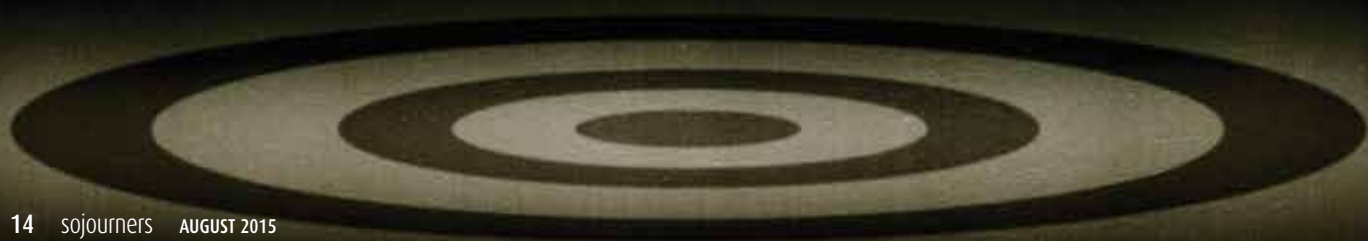


Photo illustration by Colin Anderson



NUKES

and the Pro-Life Christian

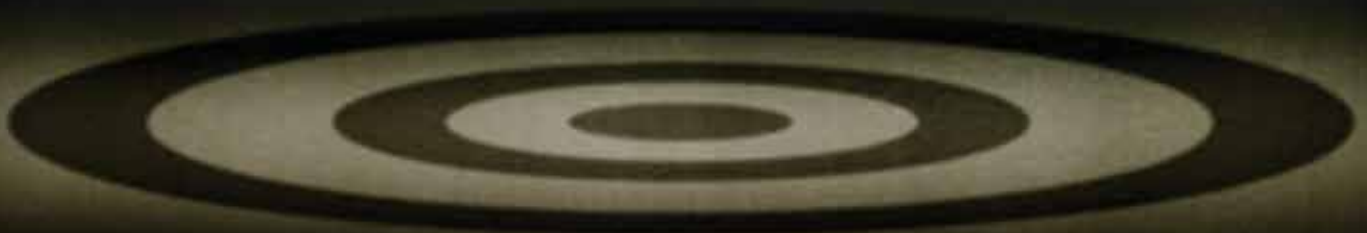
A conservative takes a second look at the morality of nuclear weapons.

by **KAREN SWALLOW PRIOR**

I WAS SITTING IN the wrong end of a police wagon the first time I questioned nuclear weapons. Technically, it was a school bus, but it served the same purpose: hauling scores of protesters to the county holding center where we would await booking for our trespasses.

We had been protesting abortion. I was thinking about nuclear weapons because a couple of those in the bus were peace activists who had long rap sheets from years of anti-war protests. I, on the other hand, was a Republican-voting, independent Baptist church-attending, conservative-leaning, law-abiding (well, until now) kind of Christian. I was awed—and grateful—that these peaceniks would join the likes of me in common cause against another kind of violence.

We seem to want our nuclear weapons
the way we want abortion:
safe, legal, and rare.





My new friends adhered to the “seamless garment” philosophy, also called the consistent life ethic, one committed to the protection of all human life, whether from war, poverty, racism, capital punishment, euthanasia, or abortion. One of them gave me a button that read “Peace begins in the womb,” and I pinned it to the bottom of the black leather motorcycle jacket I used to wear in those days.

A few years and many more abortion protests later, I was starting a local chapter of Feminists for Life, attending an Episcopal church, heading up a small private school in the inner city, teaching at a Jesuit college, and

friends in the peace movement who had shaped and sharpened me so many years ago. Perhaps it was the lure of the Lipizzaner horses from Vienna that I have adored since I was a child. Whatever it was, I went.

The trip included two conferences, actually. The official, more formal event held at Hofburg Palace drew representatives from more than 160 countries, including the United States and the Vatican, to consider the global impact of nuclear weapons. This was preceded by a two-day conference hosted by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in a baroque-era building whose crumbling plaster

All human life begins the same way.

reading the poetry of Father Daniel Berrigan, the famous Vietnam-era anti-war activist who was now being arrested for protesting abortion.

But I wasn’t thinking much more about nuclear bombs.

About 20 more years passed. I had given up on becoming Episcopalian and returned to the Baptist church and become a professor at a Baptist university. I was no longer wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket or even protest buttons. I’d exchanged my activism at the abortion clinics for a term on the board of directors of a local pro-life pregnancy center, and then exchanged that for simply writing about abortion now and then.

Haunted by the stories

But I was confronted with the issue of nuclear weapons again when I was asked to be part of a media delegation to last year’s international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna, Austria. It wasn’t exactly a welcome invitation. The last thing I needed was another cause. Or another writing assignment. Yet, something drew me. Perhaps it was my younger, more radical self that beckoned. Perhaps it was the memory of those

walls had been covered by whitewashed drywall. The institutional glare of the cheaply modernized building clashed against the tattered jeans, army fatigues, and canvas backpacks of the participants milling about who reminded me of the counterprotesters I’d faced years ago outside the abortion clinics. I found myself thinking about the police wagon and my old leather jacket.

Over four days, I viewed satellite images of hidden nuclear facilities around the world and learned which countries own nuclear weapons and which ones host them. I learned about the environmental devastation a nuclear winter could wreak. I learned that the number of nuclear weapons in the world today has been reduced from almost 70,000 to about 16,000. I learned that the United States signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, agreeing, along with numerous other countries, to work toward nuclear disarmament, a goal that continues to be official U.S. policy. Yet the United States spent an estimated \$60 billion on these weapons in 2011 alone, I learned, and the Obama administration’s plan for modernizing the U.S. nuclear weapons complex will cost about \$355 billion over the next 10 years, possibly \$1 trillion in the next 30 years.



But more haunting than all these numbers were the stories. Victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki told us what it was like to witness loved ones melting before their eyes following the blasts. We heard about women in the Marshall Islands, where the United States tested hydrogen bombs in the 1950s and 1960s, who gave birth to children with organs on the outside and no bones on the inside. They called them jellyfish babies. They made me think of the tiny, translucent little human fetuses pictured on the brochures we used to distribute outside the abortion clinics.

All human life begins the same way. Yet there are so very many ways to destroy it.

nuclear disarmament; and we assure the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament of our prayers and hopes for progress toward peace.”

But by 2005, R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, the flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention, was questioning whether the atomic bombing of two Japanese cities in World War II *was* immoral, echoing the conventional narrative that dropping the bombs saved lives by ending the war. Even so, Mohler acknowledged that the “Christian conscience must continue to struggle with the morality of the atomic age and with the specter of nuclear weapons” and that

Yet there are so very many ways to destroy it.

Perhaps it’s the seemingly infinite means of death that make it hard for the caring, conscientious person to know which to actively address—and which to surrender to helpless despair. It’s hardly surprising that the stance of the U.S. church, and most mere mortals, toward nuclear weapons—and toward abortion—ebbs and flows with political and cultural tides.

Within my own conservative Christian community, the present day flows toward greater national security. So I was surprised to learn that in 1983, in an essay titled “Noahic Covenant and Nuclear War,” Reformed theologian John Piper, while saying that war was sometimes necessary, warned that “the indiscriminate annihilation of thousands or millions of God’s image-bearers is such a blatant assault on God and his revealed will that Christians must not share in the act.”

And the year before—this was at the height of the Cold War, and the arms race seemed to be spiraling out of control—the Southern Baptist Convention (my own denomination) issued an anti-nuclear weapons resolution at its annual meeting, stating: “[W]e support a program of mutually verifiable disarmament, including

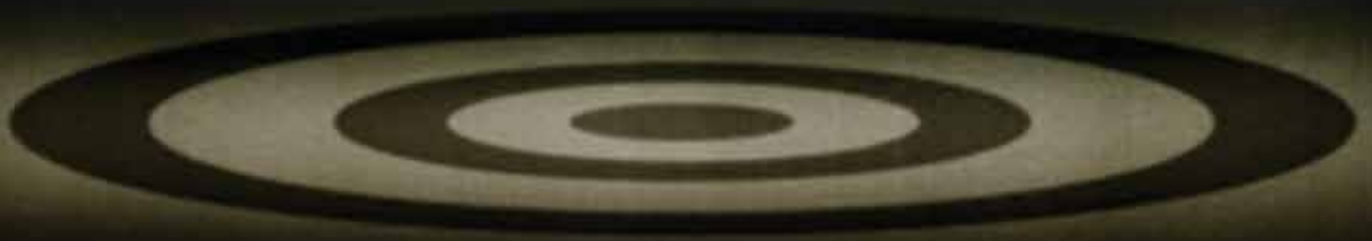
“the proliferation of nuclear weapons remains a paramount concern.”

The often-conflicted stance of the U.S. church toward nuclear weapons is reflected in the heart of one particular member of the clergy. In 1945, Father George Zabelka, a U.S. Air Force chaplain, gave his blessings to the airmen about to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But on the 40th anniversary of the bombings, Father Zabelka offered a speech in which he confessed, “I was wrong.” He continued, “Each one of us becomes responsible for the crime of war by cooperating in its preparation and in its execution. This includes the military. This includes the making of weapons. And it includes paying for the weapons. There’s no question about that. We’ve got to realize we all become responsible. Silence, doing nothing, can be one of the greatest sins.”

His words echo the convictions that led me to question abortion; they whisper to my dozing conscience on the matter of nuclear weapons.

Clumsy and devastating weapons

For most of us today, nuclear weapons seem a given, but distant, threat. The bombings of





Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred 20 years before I was born. I grew up during the Cold War when the specter of nuclear attack loomed daily, quietly, in the form of the black and yellow fallout shelter sign that leered at me every morning as I walked into my elementary school. In those days, I had the idea in my head that every plane carried bombs; I wondered with each plane that flew overhead if it might drop one. But then the Cold War ended. The day I heard the news at my university of the coup d'état attempt that resulted in the breakup of the Soviet Union is seared in my memory like the day Ronald Reagan was shot, the day O.J. Simpson was slow-chased in a white Bronco down a Los Angeles freeway, and the day the twin towers fell in New York City.

Perhaps it is as clumsy to speak of “nuclear weapons” as it is about “abortion.” Nuance is never more important than on big moral questions. “Abortion” does not distinguish among its various kinds: spontaneous abortion, therapeutic abortion, and the widespread abortion-on-demand that was legalized by *Roe v. Wade*. Similarly, the phrase “nuclear weapons” fails to express how this technology is unlike any other instrument of war. They are in a category of their own. “Not only is their power beyond imagination, but they are still the first and only weapons capable of eradicating human civilization,” writes Thomas M. Nichols, professor at the U.S. Naval War College, in his book, *No Use: Nuclear Weapons and National Security*.

For my own part, I can say that I am not a pacifist, and that I believe in the notion of a just war. But it is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to uphold even the broadest principles of just war—discrimination and proportionality—with weapons as clumsy and devastating as nuclear arms.

Nuclear weapons have always seemed, like some see abortion, I suppose, as necessary and inevitable. Most civilized people likely wish the atomic bomb had never been invented. Yet

since technology can never be un-invented, we seem as a society to want our nuclear weapons the way we want abortion: safe, legal, and rare. We don't like either, but we imagine ourselves better off in having recourse to such means if needed.

While technology can't be un-invented, it can be made obsolete—usually by better technology, but in some cases, by shifts in culturally shaped desires. After the iPod was invented, no one wanted a boom box. After the Reign of Terror, the guillotine lost its charm. In the midst of the Cold War, negotiation was desired infinitely more than war. The desire to be peacemakers transforms our very way of thinking, being, and acting. Who among us would prefer cure over prevention?

Yes, worldwide nuclear disarmament is almost as hard to imagine as a world without war—or abortion or poverty or hatred. But it's not impossible. And it must be sought before it can be found.

To be sure, those of us in the police wagon all those years ago weren't naïve enough to think that by merely protesting abortion we could end the practice completely. But we did hope that by raising social consciousness on the issue, we might shift, even if only a bit, social desires. All these years later, the latest figures from the Centers for Disease Control show that the percentage of U.S. pregnancies ending in abortion has reached “historic lows” by all measures. Perhaps we have created a society that makes abortion less desirable.

Perhaps we can create a society with a diminished appetite for nuclear weapons—and all war against human life—as well. ■

Karen Swallow Prior, a professor of English at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., is the author most recently of *Fierce Convictions: The Extraordinary Life of Hannah More: Poet, Reformer, Abolitionist* and a research fellow with the *Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*.

A Love That Disarms

**We must abolish nuclear weapons, says one Japanese theologian—
but we can't stop there • by ATSUYOSHI FUJIWARA**

OVER THE LAST 14 months, I visited Nagasaki six times to prepare for and then participate in the Christian Forum for Reconciliation in Northeast Asia, along with 60 Christian leaders from Japan, the U.S., China, and South and North Korea.

Following the forum, I attended the International Symposium for Peacemaking in Northeast Asia, held at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. These events gave me much opportunity to think about nuclear weapons and peacemaking, alone and together with a peaceable community of believers.

The devastating power unleashed on Nagasaki and Hiroshima 70 years ago shocked the human community. I have friends whose families suffered when atomic bombs fell on those two Japanese cities. But Japan was not simply a victim. The Pacific War started with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. And if the Japanese military had then had an atomic bomb, I am quite certain they would have used it.

Today, many are working to abolish nuclear weapons as inhumane and unacceptable. I am convinced that nuclear weapons cannot be justified. But the question “Why should we abolish nuclear weapons?” leads to additional questions: How do we think about wars, about killing and violence, in general? While seeking to abolish nuclear weapons, should we keep on making, selling, and using other kinds of weapons? Should we regard only *nuclear* weapons as unacceptable? The answer depends on the foundations of our ethics as people of faith.

MEMBERS OF THE early church generally refused to serve in the military. While accepting the police function of military forces, they rejected killing. They made the teaching and example of Jesus the norm for their ethics. But when Constantinian Christianity

unified church and state in the 4th century C.E., the church crafted an ethic based not on Jesus' life and teaching, but on “common sense” and natural law. Thus the teachings of Jesus came to be seen as heavenly ideals while the imperatives for daily life became “realistic choices.” In the 20th century, theologians

such as Reinhold Niebuhr seized this ethic, claiming that stopping huge evils justified the use of lesser evils, even the violent use of guns, bombs, and missiles.

This “realistic” ethic also led to the ironic tragedy of a country that claimed to be Christian dropping an atomic bomb upon Urakami Cathedral in Nagasaki, where generations of underground Roman Catholic Christians had lived, worshiped, and been persecuted for 260 years. This ethic also led to the

further irony of the United States, a “Christian country,” virtually forcing Japan, a non-Christian country, to adopt the Peace Constitution—a document that the majority of Japanese still favor keeping nearly 70 years after the end of WWII. Within the church in Japan, support is even higher. Similarly, the church and most Japanese reject the making, keeping, and use of nuclear weapons.

Those of us who take the teaching of Jesus as our norm need to reject not only atomic bombs, but also weapons and violence as a means of forcing one's will on others. The primary task of the church is to become the church, reflecting the character of the reign of God to come: shalom. No one else can do this, and no one else knows the will of God better than the church. ■

Atsuyoshi Fujiwara is a professor of theology at Aoyama Gakuin University, and founding pastor of Covenant of Grace Church, in Tokyo. He is the author most recently of Theology of Culture in a Japanese Context.

Should we regard only *nuclear* weapons as unacceptable?

A protester at a vigil in Hiroshima, Japan, marking the anniversary of the atomic bombing.



Reuters

Creating a New Norm

Younger activists, in both government and civil society, are leading worldwide efforts to ban nuclear weapons • by TYLER WIGG-STEVENSON

FOR NUCLEAR-WEAPONS watchers, the promise of the 2008 presidential campaign feels like a lifetime ago. Both Barack Obama and John McCain had endorsed the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. They were bolstered in doing so by the nonpartisan gravitas of four Cold War *éminences grises* who had rocked the foreign-policy establishment by arguing in *The Wall Street Journal* that nuclear deterrence couldn't be trusted to keep the peace in the post-Cold War era. Instead, complete elimination of all nuclear weapons was the only way to ensure they would never again be used.

The promise of the campaign seemed to be confirmed by President Obama's decision to declare, in a major speech in Prague within his first 100 days in office, that he "sought the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." His subsequent Nobel Peace Prize was awarded, in no small part, for the promise of the Prague address.

It's basically been downhill from that speech.

Yes, the 2010 New START agreement ensured continued bilateral reductions by the U.S. and Russia, which together possess more than 90 percent of global nuclear stockpiles (down to 16,000 from a peak of 65,000 in 1986). But New START didn't change the fact that both countries still have enough weapons on high alert to devastate all life on the planet.

And, for the ratification of a treaty that requires only middling arms reductions, hawks in the Senate demanded a staggering political price: the administration's promise to "modernize" the U.S. arsenal. That pledge is currently playing out in President Obama's proposal to spend \$1 trillion over the next 30 years to upgrade U.S. nuclear weapons. Meanwhile, an increasingly aggressive Russia has cancelled the historic Nunn-Lugar cooperative nuclear threat reduction program, and its officials have made ominous comments about a capacity to

wage nuclear war. With U.S.-Russian relations at a post-Cold War nadir, prospects for bilateral progress have evaporated. Around the world, the multilateral situation is hardly better, with smaller nuclear powers quietly committing funds to the indefinite perpetuation of their stockpiles.

Such events only confirm global opinions that the nuclear powers have no interest in living up to their legal commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in which they pledge to pursue "negotiations in good faith" toward the complete elimination of their own arsenals. Granted, the international community has grown used to such disappointment: According to the terms of the NPT, a conference is held every five years to review the treaty's status, and they are always failures of various sorts. At these "RevCons," benchmarks are established and action plans developed. Five years later, everyone gets together to discover that nothing has happened. Wash, rinse, repeat.

The 2015 RevCon in May was also a failure—but perhaps, for the first time in a long while, a constructive one. The participating nations were unable to agree on a consensus document about the state of the treaty, or necessary next steps. On paper, this is discouraging. But it indicates the promising refusal of the non-nuclear states to be placated any longer by the nuclear powers' empty promises.

What happens now depends very much on where one sits. From a U.S.-centered, Beltway perspective—which never paid much attention to the 2015 NPT RevCon to begin with—all the energy is focused on a potential Iran deal (eminently worthy and extremely important). It's also possible that President Obama might use executive authority to take some positive threat-reduction steps in his final 18 months in office: for instance, taking ICBMs off high-alert status, reducing the number of deployed strategic weapons, declaring a "no

Protesters chained themselves together in 2013 at the Clyde Naval Base in Falsane, Scotland, where the U.K.'s Trident nuclear submarines are based.



first use” or “deterrence only” policy, or reducing the nuclear budget. After 2016, America’s nuclear future is anyone’s guess, though the policy positions of both parties’ declared and expected candidates—with the exception of Bernie Sanders—range from the disappointingly myopic to the disastrously retrograde. One would do well to keep expectations low.

Dismantling the doublespeak

From a global perspective, however, energies are high. Over the past five years, a series of international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has revealed new information about their catastrophic effects. This, in turn, has revived interest in disarmament and invigorated a generation of younger activists in both government and civil society.

As interest has risen in a nuclear weapons ban or convention—as already exist for biological and chemical weapons—so have new champions. The increasingly vital International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is run by Beatrice Fihn

Getty Images

and an international crew of 20- and 30-somethings who are as comfortable in Vienna’s Hofburg Palace as they are on Twitter. Wildfire>_ has emerged as a sort of nuclear Diogenes, mercilessly dismantling the doublespeak employed by hypocritical nuclear powers and their “weasel” allies.

Austrian Ambassador Alexander Kmentt helped turn his government’s unilateral pledge to “fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons” (that is, a ban/convention) into a banner endorsed by (at the time of this writing) 107 nations. And (of course) there is Pope Francis, who has taken the next logical step in the Vatican’s long opposition to nuclear weapons by endorsing a global ban. For the first time in history, the three bodies representing global

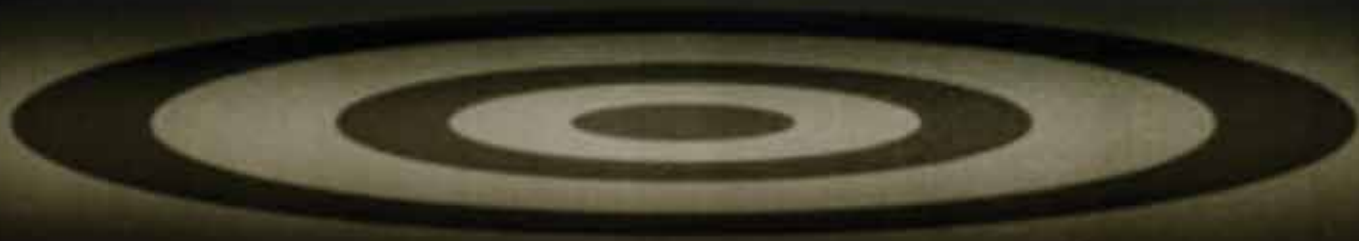
For the first time in history, the three bodies representing global Christianity are actively working for nuclear disarmament.

Christianity—along with many other faith groups—are actively working for disarmament.

There’s still important work to be done in Washington for nuclear security and disarmament. Given the U.S. political context, however, opportunities in the foreseeable future are likely to be tactical, stop-gap measures rather than strategic steps toward a nuclear weapons-free world.

By itself, of course, the disarmament movement that’s now swelling overseas won’t get us to the finish line. But by creating a clear norm of nuclear weapons as illegal and immoral, it has the potential to bring new life to an arena that’s gone necrotic. For those within the United States who are committed to the longer-term goal of abolition, it may be time to shake off any residual “Beltway blinders” and look abroad. ■

Tyler Wigg-Stevenson is chair of the Global Task Force on Nuclear Weapons of the World Evangelical Alliance and founder of the Two Futures Project.



A 'Radical' Response to Islamophobia

Christians have an important role in ending discrimination—and violence—against Muslims • by KEN CHITWOOD

"IT ALL STARTED with pig races," said Dawud, the groundskeeper at the Muslim American Society's mosque in Katy, Texas. Soon after the group purchased the land, their neighbor, Craig Baker, began hosting well-publicized hog heats for some 300 spectators every Friday evening. Baker's timing was deliberate, chosen to correspond precisely with the *jummah* prayers—the holiest time of the week for Muslims—and to offend their dietary restrictions, which forbid pork.

That was back in 2006. Today, things are more peaceful. Follow the narrow road that curves amid loblolly pines and sage grass, and you'll see sun gleaming off the black roof of the now-finished mosque. "It was a matter of disagreement, but it's over now," said Dawud last fall. "I am happy it's done and we are at peace."

But while the pig races have ended, signs of hostility linger: Two blue and white billboards bearing a Christian cross and a Star of David are posted just off the edge of the mosque's property. The intended message isn't subtle: "Muslims, you don't belong here."



Craig Baker, in front of his sign promoting pig races that were scheduled to coincide with prayers at a nearby mosque. At left, a button promoted among anti-Muslim groups.

Houston Chronicle





A firefighter hoses down the smoldering remains of the Islamic Society of Joplin (Mo.) after a suspicious fire in 2012.

Though many Americans actually had favorable views of Islam after 9/11, a recent study by Georgetown University's Bridge Initiative found that those views became increasingly negative throughout the Iraq war. In fact, in a 2014 Pew survey, researchers found that the American public viewed Muslims more negatively than every other religion or belief group.

But official data only tells part of the story. Every day, Muslims bear the brunt of Islamophobia in flesh and blood. Just look at recent headlines: "Chapel Hill Shooting Stokes Climate of Fear for Muslims," reported the Huffington Post after three young Muslims were shot by their neighbor in their front yard in February. "Arson suspected in fire at Islamic center," reported the *Houston Chronicle* several days later when a local mosque burned down. "Hundreds gather in Arizona for armed anti-Muslim protest," reported *The Washington Post* in May following a protest staged at a Phoenix mosque.

Discrimination against Muslims because of their religion is called "Islamophobia." It's a contested term, at once imprecise and polarizing; this brand of bigotry includes the vilifying of Islam or its followers based on a fear that Islam is a political force incompatible with modernity and "the West," inherently violent, and furthermore bent on "taking over America" and "killing Christians."

Mixed with religious illiteracy, largely

negative media portrayals of Muslims, and the stereotypical ways Muslims have been regarded historically—think of the depictions of Muslims as exotic and robed "others" dwelling in the desert, as bedeviling Bedouins, living in a world of heat and harems—this cruel cocktail has overflowed into a stream of general animosity toward Muslim Americans and, sometimes, violent attacks.

Islamophobia has also become quite profitable. "There is an industry that makes vast sums of money by calling themselves



"There is an industry that makes vast sums of money by calling themselves 'terrorism experts' or 'scholars of Islam' without any qualifications."

—Wilfredo Amr Ruiz

'terrorism experts' or 'scholars of Islam' without any qualifications," said Wilfredo Amr Ruiz, a Puerto Rican Muslim and civil rights lawyer who works with the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) in South Florida.

In a 2011 report, the Center for American Progress found that since 9/11, a small group of conservative funders provided \$42.6 million to support a pool of Islamophobic speakers including Frank Gaffney, Robert Spencer, Brigitte Gabriel, and Pamela Geller as they dispersed their rhetoric on national television and online blogs and via grassroots organizations. Sadly, the likes of Geller profit from pain and persecution, as she and others get paid to speak at events such as the "Muhammad Art Exhibit and Cartoon Contest," which precipitated two deaths.

BUT, FOR AMERICAN Muslims, Islamophobia isn't about someone making money or grabbing headlines. Take Zainab Shahan, an undergraduate at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Despite her proximity to Terry Jones, the Florida man who gained international attention by burning the sacred scripture of her religion, Shahan does not refer to Jones when asked what Islamophobia looks like. Instead, she talks about eyes.

"I could be walking around campus or going to dinner with friends and I see them, staring," she said. "I used to think people

A man protesting the planned construction of an Islamic community center in Murfreesboro, Tenn., confronts counterprotesters who hold signs quoting John 15:17.

gawked at me because I was strange or different or something, but now I feel sexualized and harassed in my hijab,” explained Shahan, noting the popularity of Mia Khalifa, a Lebanese-American porn star who has filmed adult movies wearing hijab. “Now I wonder if I am somebody’s fetish or if they fantasize about me.” No matter, Shahan said, “it is demeaning to be treated as an object—of disdain, oddity, or sexual fantasy.”

Thousands of miles away, in the Chicago suburbs, Abdullah Qazi is—or was—a soccer coach for his two young children. “Three parents teamed up on me one afternoon and told me I couldn’t coach anymore,” explained Qazi. “One man in a red ball cap told me I wasn’t ‘fit’ to be the coach of an ‘American’ soccer team. When I asked why, I was told it was because I am not from here. The problem is, I was born in Chicago, but I stepped down anyways for fear that my boys would bear the brunt of the abuse.”

Down in Texas, protesters recently gathered at the state capitol and at CAIR fundraising events to tell Muslims to “go home.” “There are ugly things being said, signs with racist, bigoted, sayings,” said Ruth Nasrullah, a freelance journalist and Muslim who lives near the Houston mosque that burned down due to arson. “It’s even worse on social media,” she explained. “Social media is the swamp of anti-Muslim opinions.”

“It stings; it’s hurtful and frustrating,” said Nasrullah, describing the sense of alienation felt by many U.S. Muslims. “The worst part is we are also seeing this sentiment being practiced in the streets and put into law,” she said, referring to “anti-Sharia” legislation introduced earlier this year in Texas and South Carolina. Similar legislation has passed in a handful of states, including Tennessee, South Dakota, and Arizona.

Ruiz said that in New York and elsewhere, police surveillance is on the rise—not against the perpetrators of Islamophobic hate crimes, but against Muslims who are suspect simply because they have taken the *shahadah*—the Muslim profession of faith. “The NYPD surveys Muslims just because they go to a mosque,” he explained. “They follow Muslims who go on spring break to Florida just because they are Muslims who get on a plane. It’s ridiculous.”

Sabir Amin, an administrator for a



Associated Press

Muslim organization who lives in the Bronx, shared his story: “I am a government-targeted individual. I am followed, harassed, stalked, and threatened by local police, agents, informants, and neighborhood watch group members when I am out and about, shopping, with friends or family.” He said, “I am basically deemed a ‘national threat’ solely for being a Muslim. I have never committed a crime nor will I ever, and yet I’m being treated like a criminal, an outsider, in my own country.”

THOUGH SOME U.S. Christians have joined interfaith groups in expressing solidarity with Muslims during the latest round of anti-Muslim rallies, the same Pew survey that found negative feelings toward Muslims in the general population of the U.S. public found that these feelings were slightly stronger among U.S. Protestants. Similarly, a report issued earlier this year by Lifeway Research found that among Protestant pastors, nearly two-thirds—61 percent—disagreed that true Islam creates a peaceful society. In other words, if Christians want Islamophobia to end, we may need to start with ourselves.

U.S. Muslims affirm that Christians can be important allies in ending anti-Muslim discrimination. “Christian communities have a big role to play in fighting Islamophobia,” said Ruiz. “They can be the facilitators for greater civic engagement for Muslims.” What does he suggest? Starting education programs, inviting Muslim speakers, and hosting dialogue events to help counteract the misinformation put out by Islamophobic entities.

“The perfect partners are the Christian

leaders who can open the doors for education and Muslims who are able to teach people about Islam,” said Ruiz, who sees these events as opportunities to “ask the hard questions, play hardball.” Ruiz emphasizes that “these events are not kumbaya, but that’s good. We need to have the tough conversations.”

Ruiz intimated that while he has been in Catholic, Pentecostal, and Presbyterian churches and Jewish synagogues, the vast majority of U.S. congregations have not thought about such programs. “It can only strengthen your faith when you engage your community by learning about the other,” he encouraged. “You don’t have to fear.”

Nasrullah echoed Ruiz’s comments and talked about her interactions with an evangelical blogger in Texas. “We developed a really good relationship because neither one of us had any problem with being up front with our religious beliefs,” she said. When it comes to exchanges with Muslims, Nasrullah challenged Christians to “be honest and open about your beliefs, but connect anyway.”

FOUR DAYS AFTER 9/11 I went to a church to hear a local imam speak on Islam. Though 30 or so people had signed up for the event the previous week, the room was chock-full, standing room only, to hear this man speak about his faith just days after the attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. While I do not remember exactly what he said, I remember he spoke with compassion, wisdom, and grace. And I remember that after meeting him, I did not fear “the Muslims” anymore.



Anti-Muslim graffiti defaces the Islamic Center in Dearborn, Mich., which was established in 1963.

While education and instruction are good, ending Islamophobia will also require relationships, interaction, and experiential exchange between U.S. Christians and Muslim Americans. Not only are Christians compelled to do something by the commands of scripture and the example of Jesus, but we are liberated to do so as well.

Much of Islamophobia's energy comes from what is called "identity politics." Anti-Muslim ideology tells us that we must define and protect our own identity against others—in this case, a religious other, Muslims. For example, we can look to the rise of right-wing parties in Europe where Muslims are accused of not having integrated properly into "multiculturalism." We can only hope that such political views will not gain more traction here in the U.S.

For followers of Christ, our identity is not wrapped up in our culture, our creed, our country, or our carefully constructed conception of the "religious other." Instead, our identity is founded in Christ, and Christ alone. Indeed, it is an essential aspect of Christian faith that we, who were once far off—strangers, aliens, and outsiders—have now been brought near in Jesus. As the apostle Paul put it, "the dividing wall of hostility" has been broken down in Christ, "who is our peace" (Ephesians 2:11-22).

This message is immensely liberating. We, who are not defined by our animosity to God or our alienation from God's family, likewise no longer need to identify ourselves by our opposition to the other. We are no longer enslaved to cultural constructions of antipathy such as Islamophobia.

Looking to the example of Jesus who sat with Samaritans, ate with tax collectors, and became friends with other groups who ranked low on first-century public opinion surveys (see John 4, Luke 7, 14), Christians are called to take up Jesus' cue and pursue radical relationships in the face of Islamophobia. Indeed, in such an environment of hate and bigotry, friendships can be downright revolutionary. They can toss the world on its head.

The problem with Islamophobia, said Jon Huckins, co-founding director of the Global Immersion Project—an organization that "cultivates everyday peacemakers through immersion in global conflict"—is that it "forces people to pursue a different set of questions about safety, security, and persecution and not about hospitality, collaboration, and faithfulness." And when we are preoccupied with our own safety, he explained, this "removes any ability to see the humanity and dignity in the situation and plight of many Muslims throughout the world."

Huckins encouraged U.S. churches to move from a posture of defense to one of hospitality, to foster peacemaking in "the fertile soil of relationships." "The move to eradicate Islamophobia has to be 100 percent relational," he explained, "with the individuals around the table not being identified as Christian, Muslim, or whatever, but as friends." ■

Ken Chitwood is a doctoral student at the University of Florida studying global Islam and religion in the Americas; he is also a Lutheran pastor and theologian.



"Social media is the swamp of anti-Muslim opinions."

—Ruth Nasrullah

Cricket in the Water Jug

One by one the stars come up over the Mekong,
and the Buddhist novices,
finished with the evening prayers,
rush out to the water in their orange robes,
and stand with their hands over their eyes,
as if the light were too much for them.

Their master tells them,
*Boys, if you want to dream to the stars
you must ask the universe as you go to sleep.
Then you will rise up over the river
and fly above the planet, a light among the lights.*

We sit in silence awhile,
listening to their robes rustling,
dogs barking in the muddy lanes of the village.
The high, nasal music of Thailand carries
through open shutters and echoes through the temple grounds.

Behind us, a cricket sings in the water jug,
comfortable in its covered pot,
oblivious of the stars.

And tonight I do not ask the universe for anything.
I would rather sleep close to home
like the cricket in the water jug, now the only sound,
singing *water and earth, water and earth*,
such mortal music,
this voice in the darkness,
which makes the clay sing.

Victoria Armour-Hileman is the author of *Singing to the Dead*, a memoir about working with Mon Buddhist monks in Bangkok. She currently teaches writing in Atlanta.





Born Suspect

This isn't a story about the death penalty. It's about life interrupted, making a new world possible • by JONATHAN WILSON-HARTGROVE

ON A COOL NIGHT in spring 2006, I knelt with a half-dozen friends on the driveway of North Carolina's maximum-security prison. When officers came to inform us we were trespassing, we asked if they would join us in prayer against the scheduled execution of Willie Brown. Though one officer thanked us for doing what he could not, we were arrested and carried off to the county jail. Willie Brown died early the next morning.

But this isn't an article about the death penalty.

At the county jail that evening nearly a decade ago, I was fingerprinted, strip-searched, dressed in an orange jumpsuit, and processed into the general population of an overcrowded cell block. When I walked onto the block, I was greeted almost immediately by a 20-something African-American man who asked me, "What the hell are you doing here?" As I summarized the events of the previous evening that had led to my arrest, he decided I was teachable. "You

wanna know how I knew you weren't supposed to be here?" he asked. "Cause everybody else in here I knew before they got here. We're all from the same hood."

"They only kill people like us," my teacher at the county jail told me that day. "The train that ends at death row starts here."

A new underground railroad

Since the deaths of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, and Freddie Gray at the hands of law enforcement officers, the U.S. has begun to engage a public conversation about the ways racial profiling creates an environment where young men like my volunteer teacher are born suspect. While the NAACP has focused its organizing efforts around anti-profiling legislation, Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, points out how the systemic problems exposed by police brutality against young black men grow out of the complex history of a Southern reaction against the civil rights movement, where tough-on-crime politicians called for "law and order," a "war on drugs," and

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"They only kill people like us," my teacher at the county jail told me that day. "The train that ends at death row starts here."

mandatory-minimum sentences for low-level crimes. Poor black children are born suspect, Alexander argues, because they are born into a criminal caste system that has replaced the old Jim Crow laws of the segregated South.

Alexander's analysis sounds a lot like the education I received in that county jail cell-block a decade ago. When asked where she sees hope today, Alexander points to people like my teacher: directly affected individuals who are not only fighting to survive but also organizing others to confront a broken system and build up beloved community.

She points to efforts such as the Children's Defense Fund's Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline Campaign, a network of state-based coalitions from California to Tennessee that empowers people of color to provide preventative support—mentoring, after-school programs, and summer jobs, for example—to children growing up under the new Jim Crow. While working to build a movement that can abolish mass incarceration, the Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline Campaign is an underground railroad that aims to save every individual it can.

I caught up with Eric Brown, lead organizer for CDF's campaign, at the Re-Visioning Justice in America conference this spring in Nashville, Tenn., where faith-rooted organizers from around the country came together to hear Alexander and Bryan Stevenson, author of *The New York Times* best seller *Just Mercy*. While the mostly white audience was eager to analyze the policy issues involved in changing our broken criminal justice system, Brown was more interested in telling us about the kids he knows and works with in North Nashville. We talked about Brian, a 15-year-old who Brown got to know inside the local detention center. Brian is locked up on a drug charge, but Brown wanted me to understand that there's a story behind that charge—a story in which Brian was born suspect and brought up to expect that he would end up dead or in prison.

Brian's story

The oldest of five children, Brian grew up in North Nashville without a father. His father was not dead but locked up on a drug charge, unable to either provide for his family or pass on to his children what he has learned about

how to survive a harsh environment. Left to raise five children on her own, Brian's mother turned to drugs as a coping mechanism when he was still young. Looking for an occasional escape, she became addicted to crack and couldn't care for her children. Brian knew that social services would split up his family if he didn't do something. So he got a job doing the only thing he knew. He started selling drugs in his neighborhood.

As Brown tells the story, he becomes animated, emphasizing how no one hates drugs more than Brian. "Drugs took his dad away; drugs wrecked his momma's life. No one needs to tell Brian drugs are bad. But drugs were all this 15-year-old knew," Brown says. "He was trying to be a provider at 15." Brian's family values were neither affirmed by his community nor acknowledged by the criminal justice system. Viewing his decision to sell drugs as a bad choice, our retributive justice system sought to punish and degrade him by locking him up and branding him a criminal.

To Brian, it feels like a death sentence. But this isn't an article about the death penalty.

Brown says CDF's Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline Campaign is rooted in the Southern Freedom Movement that interrupted Jim Crow segregation in Nashville half a century ago through nonviolent direct action. This history is not hidden. I stopped by Nashville's Public Library and climbed the stairs to its second floor civil rights room, where the rules for sit-ins are engraved on a symbolic lunch counter. In a small theater, a video tells the story of Rev. Jim Lawson, who trained Diane Nash, John Lewis, C.T. Vivian, and dozens of other civil rights leaders in the history and practice of nonviolence.

That core group of nonviolent soldiers would go on to lead the sit-in movement in Nashville and later the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which took up the Freedom Rides in 1961 and laid the groundwork for Freedom Summer in 1964. Lawson, their trainer, was an adviser and friend all along the way. Half a century later, he's working with Brown and his colleagues, introducing them to a force more powerful than any drug or weapon.

Damien Durr, another member of CDF's Nashville team, works in North Nashville's public schools, mentoring young men like Brian and inviting them to join the campaign to dismantle the cradle-to-prison pipeline. As

both a teacher and a local church minister, Durr sees how the institutions he represents have participated in the condemnation of these young men, conflating the labels of “sinner” and “criminal” and constructing a practical theology that pretends young people have a choice between an escapist salvation and the secular hell of prison. As a follower of the Jesus who took on human flesh and moved into the hood, Durr wants to invite young men like Brian into a new kind of community where they are embraced as beloved children of God and empowered to lead their neighbors toward a better future.

I want to know what “best practices” Brown, Durr, and their colleagues are employing in their work with youth and what kind of results they’re getting. The nonprofit I work with runs a youth mentoring program in a neighborhood like North Nashville; I think I know what I’m looking for. But Brown challenges me. “You know, we always say, ‘It takes a village,’ but I don’t think we’ve really asked ourselves what that means in places like North Nashville,” he says. “We’re not just building a program to help kids ‘succeed’ and get out of North Nashville. We want to help them imagine a good life here. Because if people can live well here, they can live well anywhere.”

Ndume’s story

Ndume Olatushani didn’t grow up in North Nashville, but the notorious Pruitt-Igoe projects in St. Louis that he called home in the 1960s gave him plenty of experience to understand what young people born suspect face today. Though he knew the love of a mother who raised 11 children against great odds, Olatushani felt the economic injustice his mother faced and decided to try to even the score. He admits he got involved in breaking and entering. But after being labeled a criminal by St. Louis police, Olatushani was targeted as a murder suspect in a hard-to-solve Memphis case tied to St. Louis only by a stolen car. Though Olatushani had never been to Tennessee before his arrest, he was convicted in a Memphis court and sentenced to Tennessee’s death row.

But, again, this isn’t a story about the death penalty.

While Olatushani was in prison, his mother died, and he nearly lost all hope. But after a vision in which his mother came to him

and said, “Get up,” this man born suspect and condemned to die discovered a new imagination through art. “There’s a lot of things we should be angry about,” Olatushani says. “But you have to learn what to do with your anger. Painting helped me to learn that.” Painting also helped Olatushani build community.

While still on death row, he met Anne-Marie Moyes, a volunteer who was coordinating an art show for prisoners. Captivated by Olatushani, Moyes became interested in his case, eventually going to law school in order to fight for his release. Though the fight took more than two decades and help



Ndume Olatushani and Anne-Marie Moyes.

from an even wider community, Olatushani walked out of prison in 2012, married Moyes, and joined CDF’s Nashville team.

After sharing his story at a conference session, Olatushani is excited to show me the art project he’s been working on with some of Durr’s students in North Nashville. It is a row of wooden school desks, painted with facts and statistics about mass incarceration in the U.S. On one end of the row, there is a cradle. Chairs that were made so that students could sit in them and study were filled instead with orange jumpsuits. One of them is stuffed with cash, flowing out of the hole were a head should be. A Bible is open on the desk, but it has handcuffs holding its pages down. On the far end, where this representation of the cradle-to-prison pipeline ends, a desk sits as a memorial to George Stinney Jr., who was executed in South Carolina’s electric chair in 1944

at the age of 14. Olatushani tells me that the jumpsuit in that chair is the one Olatushani wore the day he came home from death row.

He has a lot of things to be angry about, but Olatushani speaks with moral authority about the power of art to interrupt us. This isn’t just any art teacher working with inner city kids. Born suspect like them, he has faced the worst of what they must face and has seen the power of a loving community to overcome the power of death. Who better to help the young people of North Nashville imagine a better future for us all?

‘Where do you see hope in all this?’

Before heading home, I left the CDF team to talk to a group of Episcopalians about prayer and the pursuit of justice. It’s an all-white crowd, and we’re a world away from North Nashville, but these are my people, and we need a better future too. I tell them about that day a decade ago when a guy at the county jail introduced me to the cradle-to-prison pipeline, and we talk for an hour about the complexities of what it will take to dismantle a system in which some people profit from condemning, caging, and even killing others.

When an older gentleman asks where I see hope in all of this, I tell him about Brown and Durr and Olatushani; I tell him about the young people who made the art installation. I tell him that white folks like him and me aren’t going to fix this problem, but that we can learn to support work such as the Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline Campaign, just as white folks supported the black-led civil rights movement with their money, their time, and their lives. I tell him that I think this is what the scriptures mean when they say “the stone that the builder rejected has become the chief cornerstone.”

Jesus was condemned to die and ultimately executed, but his isn’t a story about the death penalty. It’s a story about how God interrupts us, making a new world possible. It’s a story about how those who’ve been condemned can show us all what it means to live for change. ■

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove directs the School for Conversion, a Durham, N.C.-based organization that seeks to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline by “making surprising friendships possible” (www.schoolforconversion.org).

Eric England/Nashville Scene

War, Peace, and the Stories We Tell

Army vet and peace educator Paul K. Chappell aims to change our cultural narratives about violence.

by CATHERINE WOODIWISS

“THE IDEA THAT peace is inevitable is as dangerous as the idea that war is inevitable,” says author and peace educator Paul K. Chappell. We’ve been discussing peace in practice for the better part of an hour, and he’s warming to the theme. He puts forward an unlikely premise—that violence is not intrinsic to human nature.

Paul Chappell isn’t what you would expect in a peace champion. A graduate of West Point and a member of the U.S. military for seven years, including as a captain in Iraq, he first honed his fighting skills on school playgrounds, getting expelled for fighting in grade school and suspended in high school. He was bullied as a child for his skin color (his father, a veteran of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, was biracial—black and white—and his mother is Korean). Because of his father’s war trauma, Chappell describes his childhood as “unpredictably violent.”

Photos by Rick Reinhard

War and peace are always choices, and both



require our participation to succeed.

"We have to develop a cultural literacy in the

It's hard now to imagine this former troubled youth, both perpetrator and victim of violence, as the articulate Chappell thoughtfully winds his way through classical theory and national myth. But Chappell's learned taste for creed over instinct is clear. The army provided the closest thing to family that a young Chappell had ever encountered, he tells me, but despite that deep affection—or perhaps because of it—he began paying attention to the lasting effects of war and trauma on his brothers-and-sisters-in-arms.

What he discovered about the effects of trauma on the human psyche provided the spark for his peace trainings—conducted with First Nations peoples in Nova Scotia; war-torn communities in Gulu, Uganda; model U.N. participants in Germany; high school students in Washington, D.C.; and college students and justice groups across the U.S.—as well as his book series, *The Road to Peace* (the latest installment is due in late 2015). The series is a heavily psychological, almost clinical examination of violence and peacemaking—Chappell says he “studies war like a doctor studies illness”—with a decidedly provocative edge.

“The belief that humans are fundamentally violent is a constructed myth,” says Chappell, who also serves as peace leadership director for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

“We have myths about gender and race. And we have myths about violence—about who we are, and about what we must do as a result.”

For centuries, Christians committed to nonviolence have sought to speak out against the state's use of violence to divide, kill, maim, and threaten other humans made in the image of God. But the institutions of power that protect the state—any state—prove resistant to this call.

Chappell is positioning himself at the corner of moral wisdom, battle tactics, and civil rights movements in an attempt to create new narratives for peacemakers and refute old, damaging ones.

One of those old narratives is that if violence is fundamental, it is inevitable—an assertion Chappell doggedly works to reject.

“Violence has preventable causes just like physical illness has preventable causes,” he says. “If anyone today gets [sick], people realize something has gone wrong. When

someone gets malaria, cancer, Ebola, or AIDS, I have never heard anyone say ‘that is human nature.’ But when people are violent, we say, ‘Well, it’s just human nature; we have to bomb people.’”

Chappell also rejects an opposite, idealistic conclusion: Humans are inherently peaceful. He says, continuing with the disease analogy, “You can’t say human beings are inherently healthy, because there are sick people all over the world. Nevertheless, we are *supposed* to be healthy, because it furthers our survival. In a similar way, we are *supposed* to be peaceful, even though many people are not.” His conclusion: War and peace are always choices, and both require our participation. “We can choose to resolve the hidden causes of violence or surrender to them.”

This is a distinctly discomfiting statement for many of us in the U.S., who may publicly condemn movements toward war while inwardly believing that nothing will change our military industrial complex. It's perhaps more disconcerting for churches, who may discuss violence in the world but less often point out the violence done in our name, and



Paul Chappell in 2009 at Fort Bliss, Texas.

who rarely devote resources to learning the ins and outs of national security, or what practical influence citizens have on our foreign policy, or how churches may serve as useful levers in the work for peace.

From a Christian perspective, Chappell's argument preferences the church's historical role in nonviolent movements over its doctrine of original sin. The latter implies humanity will always choose violence due to our fallen nature and bolsters a false belief that war-making is inevitable and the best option available. Chappell encourages rigorous questioning of received frameworks: We are surrounded by the myth that violence simply will happen, as a natural course of human life. And for many of us, that myth is enough to drive us into passive, Ecclesiastes-style lament.

Before he became an outspoken proponent for peace, Chappell became intimately acquainted with one source of this myth during his time in the army.

“Seeing how the military trains people to function in very extreme environments reveals a lot about human behavior,” says Chappell. “In order to wage war, we have to create some kind of [psychological] distance. Narratives of ‘they’re evil, they’re subhuman, barbarians, not like us.’ All countries around the world and in history have used very similar messages about adversaries.”

Nationalism and mythmaking

This otherizing narrative that engenders camaraderie among U.S. fighters and transforms rival forces into evil enemies is played out on the public stage as well, where it is usually wrapped in political zeal, patriotic identity, and even religious fervor.

“I see more religious reverence on Veteran's Day than I see on Christmas. ... If you oppose the war system, you're regarded as something of a heretic,” says Chappell.

At least in public rhetoric, the United States treats its warriors as heroes. Most of us are familiar with the pageantry surrounding even lowly and bungled aggressions—George W. Bush landed on an aircraft carrier to declare victory in Iraq; Nobel Peace Prize-winning Barack Obama stopped the presses to reveal the capture and killing of Osama bin Laden.

How do other societies “do war”? Is the myth of inevitable violence a purely

art of living."

American one, designed to shore up imperial influence? Here Chappell's research is surprising.

"War propaganda functions the same way in every culture and time, period," he says. "Every government in history has said they're fighting for peace and safety ... for self-defense or freedom. If you give people purpose and meaning, people will go without food, without water, will willingly die for something.

"When we understand that belonging is a basic human drive that can actually overpower physical drives, we better understand nationalism."

Chappell's attempt to map the psychology of violence has implications for understanding and diffusing conflict at all levels. Recent political demonstrations, from Tahrir Square to West Baltimore, have arisen from citizens aggrieved by abuses by states or economies that cut significant portions of a population out of a larger identity narrative.

As a result, the tactics across time and cultures for recruiting people to violence often follow a similar psychology—displaced, lonely, disoriented individuals are targeted with the promise of an in-group that provides both material needs and a sense of kinship, power, and larger purpose.

In that lens, the operating myths of terror groups, militaries, and criminal gangs start to look not so very different. It's a disturbing thought, but it shouldn't be a new one—the same patterns also map into our neighborhoods and homes.

"A big part of the problem is that our society does not provide an alternative source of purpose and meaning that people find fulfilling," says Chappell. "How do we give people a stable sense of worth and meaning? Humans hunger for that, and our society right now doesn't do a good job of filling that hunger."

Church as peace-wagers

In the U.S. the church used to help fill that hunger. But the Religious Landscape Study from Pew Research Center released in May shows just how far the church is in decline. In just seven years, the share of Americans who don't identify with any religion has risen sharply, to 23 percent.

In terms of national narrative creation, the church's gospel of nonviolent peace stands several steps below the state's gospel of war-for-peace.



But 44 percent of those who didn't identify with any religion answered "very" to "somewhat" when asked about religion's importance in their life—making a strong case that higher purpose narratives are still important. All of our religious institutions embrace peace as a core value. Perhaps how we tell those narratives, and who is marginalized, abused, or killed as a result, is a more telling metric of true peace.

And despite reports of its decline, the U.S. church has the infrastructure, history, and gospel purpose to be a profound storyteller for waging peace.

In Chappell's own life, such narratives were lacking.

"I was never taught as a child how to overcome fear, or how to calm myself down," he says.

"The art of resolving conflict, building empathy, overcoming hatred—it calls for a paradigm shift. We have to develop a cultural literacy in the art of living."

Chappell is working to build and restore that literacy. As a former fighter, it's fitting that Chappell relies on the use of force for images to illustrate his case for peace—in this case, the nonviolent practice of jiu-jitsu.

"Like waging peace, jiu-jitsu is a way to completely subdue your opponents without hurting them," wrote Chappell in the

Huffington Post. "It is a way to defeat a much larger person by using leverage, technique, and turning their own strengths against them."

Chappell points to the women's rights movement in the early 20th century as an example of jiu-jitsu-like tactics—women's rights activists facing staunch opposition

from the government, the military, and schools persisted when outnumbered and outfunded, pinpointed weaknesses, and eventually subdued larger opponents.

Surprising to some, nonviolence is actually a highly effective strategy. In a study of violent and nonviolent campaigns between

1900 and 2008, political scientists Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan found that nonviolent campaigns were twice as successful at achieving their goals as violent ones. More so, nonviolent campaigns are increasingly successful and violent ones decreasingly so. They credit much of this to the broad relational capital and strong sense of belonging that come with mass participation and prepared demonstrators' devotion to nonviolence whatever the cost.

While war is destructive and peace is constructive, "waging war and waging peace both require courage, cooperation, strategic

"We have myths about violence—about who we are, and about what we must do as a result."

—Paul Chappell



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thinking, discipline, and resilience,” says Chappell.

When waging peace, “you’re always David, you’re always fighting Goliath,” he says. “To wage peace effectively you must use truth strategically and creatively. Just as soldiers have excellent training in waging war, we must give people excellent training in waging peace.”

In this Chappell follows a great tradition of 20th century nonviolent thinkers, from Mahatma Gandhi to Dorothy Day to Martin Luther King Jr. For those asking what waging peace looks like in practice, Chappell’s language of active precision calls to mind King’s casting of nonviolence as a “powerful and

“If you oppose the war system, you’re regarded as something of a heretic.”

just weapon” that cuts without wounding. “It is a sword that heals,” wrote King.

As for Chappell, nonviolence begins with myth-busting: “Any injustice is based on entrenched myth about how the world really works. If we do not challenge that myth, we do not make progress.”

A commitment to waging peace necessitates putting the ball firmly in our own court. It is a challenge to no longer passively accept myths of violence and inevitable war, and to begin the work of justice and peace afresh.

“We talk about the 1 percent [as relates to wealth], but there’s another 1 percent,” says Chappell. “Less than 1 percent of the U.S. population actively participated in the civil rights movement, or in women’s rights movements. It’s very important that we become part of that 1 percent.”

Our society’s reliance on war may still be entrenched beyond reach, in other words, but we can begin the work of unearthing the mythologies that surround it.

For Chappell, a multiracial child of domestic abuse, that can mean a difference between life and death.

“I’m an example of that,” he says. “I am living proof that change has happened.” ■

Catherine Woodiwiss (@chwoodiwiss) is the associate web editor for Sojourners.

A Prescription for the Earth

AS THE FATE of the world hangs in the balance, one humble pastor—leader of the world’s smallest nation-state—offers a word. Well, closer to 40,000 words.

Pope Francis’ much awaited social teaching on ecology was released in June to global acclaim and thunderous Twitterapplause. *Laudato Si’* (“Praised Be to You”) takes its name from a line in St. Francis of Assisi’s “The Canticle of the Creatures,” written in 1225. The encyclical lays out the house rules for this earthly commons we share—archaea, bacteria, and eukaryota alike. (Google it. You, me, all the fauna and flora, are part of eukaryota.) So, what do you need to know?

1 The news is not good. The world’s leading spiritual physician has diagnosed “every person living on this planet” with a progressive and degenerative disease. A soul sickness has spread through us to infect the soil, seas, skies, and even the seasons. Among humans, the poorest have the least resistance and the richest are the major vectors.

Pope Francis, the world’s spiritual physician, has diagnosed us with a degenerative disease.

This disease multiplies in isolation and loneliness, with symptoms of obsessive consumption, greed and corruption, and habitual narcissism. “The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast.”

2 This disease is having dire consequences: objectification of the other, a failure of awe in the presence of beauty, and a defiance of reality by those who claim the “invisible forces of the market will regulate the economy” and dismiss

the impact on society and nature as “collateral damage.” Our family home—the one our children will inherit—looks “more and more like an immense pile of filth.”

3 Some will respond to this drastic diagnosis with “obstructionist attitudes”: denial, indifference, resignation, or blind confidence in technology. But followers of Jesus Christ believe “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations,” and the Spirit of life dwelling in every creature calls us to enter into relationship with God. We cultivate “ecological virtues” of humility, tenderness, protecting the vulnerable, simplicity, limited use of natural resources, and preferencing human dignity over profit for self or others. We believe that all private property has a social purpose, and we are part of a “universal communion” that excludes nothing and no one.

4 Christians have a unique role in bringing this disease under control. First, we need to repent from teaching that God ordained humans to dominate and enslave nature, rather than to serve and preserve creation as “ministers of the Creator.”

Second, we must promote reverence for birds, flowers, sunsets, the ocean, cultures, and peoples, and virtuous habits, such as prayer at meals, reduced consumerism, and resting on Sundays, that promote “ecological conversion.” To eradicate this soul sickness requires the whole human family cooperating “as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements, and talents.” Everyone can do something.

Every good thing you do matters and multiplies. Everything is connected.

5 Even with such a grave diagnosis, the Holy One, who loves us so much, is always present. The Lord of life “does not abandon us.” We go bravely on, with love impelling us to find new ways to live. It is time to “take charge of this home that has been entrusted to us.” Let us sing as we go, heads held high, determined to let no one take our dignity and never to relinquish “the joy of our hope.”

Scientists have catalogued the symptoms. Our religious traditions have identified the disease. Everyone can take precautions to control its spread. However, we still lack “leadership capable of striking out on new paths and meeting the needs of the present with concern for all and without prejudice toward coming generations” and “a legal framework which can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems.” Prior governmental responses have been weak—and weak action actually *strengthens* the disease.

In Paris this fall, the global climate meeting must prioritize a politics for people—one free from the delusion of a technological salvation or the pathological fear of profaning a deified market. Starting now, every single person (even those corporate golems formed under Citizens United) must demand worldwide legal processes that prioritize and enforce good habits of ecological citizenship. *Laudato Si’* provides a global moral framework for moving forward. ■

Rose Marie Berger, a Sojourners senior associate editor, is a Catholic peace activist and poet.





Kamala Khan, a new kind of superhero.

By Abigail Olcese

Real Life, With **Superpowers**

In *Ms. Marvel*, a Muslim teenage girl is the hero we've been waiting for.

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME someone told me I couldn't do something because I was a girl. I was in preschool, preparing for an epic game of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles with a group of boys. I was playing April O'Neil, the Turtles' journalist ally. As we started our game of pretend, my teacher came over to ask what we were doing.

"Playing Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," I responded.

"Oh, you shouldn't be playing that."

"But I'm April," I explained. "I'm a girl."

"No, girls don't play games like that," she told me, and directed me toward the finger paints.

Whatever my teacher's intentions, the damage was done. From that day on, superheroes and all things related were a "boy thing." That meant the X-Men, Batman, Superman, and, yes, Donatello and his human-reptile hybrid team were all off-limits. I eventually grew to love comics as a teenager and an adult, but I was aware that they rarely featured anyone other than white men (or, occasionally, heavily objectified women) as the heroes.

Thank goodness for Kamala Khan.



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inspired costumes, fan blogs, and even activism campaigns.

The comic is fun, with witty dialogue and detailed art. It's also easy for newer comic readers to understand, a novelty in a genre known for dense plots. But the series' true strength comes from its heroine, who faces everyday, identifiable struggles. The first conflict Kamala faces in *Ms. Marvel* isn't a world-threatening supervillain. It's whether

Creating a Muslim superhero in an age of Islamophobia seems like the gamble to end all gambles.

or not she'll be able to sneak out to a party with the popular kids.

It's not just that Kamala is a nerd, or a teenage girl, or a Muslim, or Pakistani-American that makes her stand out, but all of it together. The real message of *Ms. Marvel* is that for all the things that make Kamala different, she is, at her core, just like the rest of us. Her religion, passions, family loyalty, and ethnic identity all go into making her who she is. Kamala's attempt to keep these parts of herself balanced is as much a part of the story as whatever villain she's battling.

"From the get-go, *Ms. Marvel* addressed Kamala Khan's experience with a lot of nuance, really bringing to life various aspects of her character," Slate writer and *Ms. Marvel* fan Tammy Oler told *Sojourners*. "I think she's actually one of the most relatable characters in all of comic books right now. I just can't help but wish that I had been able to read *Ms. Marvel* when I was young."

Behind the mosque

For a big publisher such as Marvel, creating a Muslim superhero in an age of Islamophobia seems like the gamble to end all gambles. But Wilson's approach to Kamala and her family's religion is nothing short of genius. It's a multifaceted take that allows Muslim readers to identify directly with the character and, from an interfaith standpoint, for non-Muslim readers to recognize similar lessons and struggles from

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New & Noteworthy



LAWLESS

For *Cartel Land*, filmmaker Matthew Heineman embedded himself with two vigilante groups battling Mexico's drug cartels on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. The vigilantes believe that they are stepping in for their countries' failed institutions, but must try not to "become the criminals [they're] fighting against." The Documentary Group

SHE WHO BELIEVES

The new *Women in Religions* series from New York University Press offers accessible primers on ways women have shaped and been influenced by various religious traditions. The first three volumes published include *Women in New Religions*, by Laura Vance, and *Women in Christian Traditions*, by Rebecca Moore. NYU Press

NO EASY WAY

In *Pre-Post-Racial America: Spiritual Stories from the Front Lines*, Sandhya Rani Jha, a pastor, activist, and anti-racism trainer explores our complicated racial landscape through several people's stories, illuminating the difficult but vital path to the hope of the Beloved Community. Chalice Press

LOVE AND JUSTICE

Abounding in Kindness: Writings for the People of God collects some of the less "academic" pieces by respected Catholic feminist theologian Elizabeth A. Johnson. Through a variety of topics, she testifies to the "overflowing compassion of the living God engaged with the struggles and suffering of the world." Orbis

Kamala is the teenage protagonist of Marvel Comics' rebooted *Ms. Marvel* series. She's a clever, funny 16-year-old living in Jersey City, N.J., who, in addition to having superpowers, writes superhero fan fiction, plays video games, and struggles with parent-enforced curfews. She also happens to be the second-generation daughter of Pakistani immigrants and a practicing Muslim.

That's a lot to chew on, and the stakes for a comic like this—Kamala is the first-ever Muslim superhero to headline a series in mainstream comics—couldn't be higher. Despite the long odds, however, *Ms. Marvel* has exploded in popularity, thanks to the series' talented writer, G. Willow Wilson (herself a convert to Islam), and artist Adrian Alphona. *Ms. Marvel #1* has been reprinted seven times, practically unheard of in the comic book industry. The character has

Revisiting the Sugar Bowl

AS THIS IS written, the U.S. and Cuba are in the final stages of the haggling that will likely lead to the opening of embassies in Havana and Washington, and peace, love, and understanding seem to be breaking out all over. Pope Francis, who helped broker the U.S.-Cuba thaw, will visit the island in September on his way to the U.S. After a recent meeting with the pope, Cuban President Raul Castro said, “if the pope continues to talk as he does, sooner or later I will start praying again and return to the Catholic Church.” And Major League Baseball is already working on bringing at least spring training games back to baseball-crazy Cuba.

In the U.S. media, discussion of the new détente with Cuba has focused almost entirely on the past 55 years of Cold War-inspired confrontation. However, the U.S. and Cuba had a close and troubled relationship for a full 60 years before Fidel Castro took power, and as hostilities wane and the U.S. economic



Brooklyn Dodgers manager Leo Durocher, left, and team president Branch Rickey during spring training at Gran Stadium in Havana in 1947.

but with crucial caveats granting the U.S. perpetual rights to a naval base at Guantánamo and authority to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs whenever our perceived interests were threatened. U.S. troops occupied the entire island from 1906 to 1909 and returned in 1912 to suppress anti-discrimination protests by black Cubans.

During those early decades of the “American century,” Cuban plantations became America's sugar bowl and Havana became a sort of adult theme park for wealthy U.S. tourists. Francis Ford Coppola captured some of the flavor of this period in the Havana sequences of *The Godfather: Part II*. A bleached-out version of Afro-Cuban popular music infiltrated the U.S. market via such bandleaders as Xavier Cugat and his former guitar player Desi Arnaz. Arnaz, of course, became most famous playing opposite his wife, Lucille Ball, on the groundbreaking sitcom *I Love Lucy*. As the Cuban bandleader Ricky Ricardo, Arnaz's broken and accented English was the butt of a running joke in practically every episode.



The one U.S. export that Cubans took to heart during those years was baseball. The sport became incredibly popular on the island, and white-looking Cubans began playing in the U.S. major leagues in 1911. Cubans with noticeable African features played in the U.S. Negro leagues, and from 1900 on African-American players were welcomed in

Cuba's professional league, which played during the U.S. offseason. Eventually, Cuba played a part in the integration of the major leagues when Dodger general manager Branch Rickey took his team to Havana in 1947 for spring training so Jackie Robinson could be incorporated into the team away from the media circus and Jim Crow laws of the Florida training camps.

As U.S.-Cuba relations begin again, Cuba now has control over its own land. Castro's nationalization of U.S. sugar holdings was, after all, what started the old conflict. Cuba's music culture, which has continued to thrive and evolve, will undoubtedly find a new audience in the U.S. And the U.S. major leagues are chomping at the bit to get at Cuban baseball players. The challenge for Raul Castro and his successors will be finding a way to share Cuba's cultural wealth without

selling the nation's soul to the U.S. entertainment-industrial complex. ■

Danny Duncan Collum, author of the novel *White Boy*, teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort.

As hostilities wane, the patterns of U.S.-Cuban “prehistory” may become important again.

embargo against Cuba is eventually dropped, the patterns of this U.S.-Cuban “prehistory” may become important again.

That story begins in 1898, when the U.S. empire first extended beyond our North American shores as the U.S. took control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines at the end of the Spanish-American War. Puerto Rico we still hold. In the Philippines we spent the first decades of the 20th century slaughtering thousands in a war to suppress local insurgents and only granted the islands official independence in 1946. In Cuba, we granted independence in 1902,

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their own personal journeys.

The difficulty of identifying as a Muslim and as an American is a situation with which Wilson is intimately familiar. Raised an atheist, she was drawn to Islam in college, and converted while living in Egypt. In an interview a few years ago, Wilson said of her religious and national identities, “To me they’re inseparable. ... I am a Muslim and an American. Politically this is incredibly irritating, but it’s not an identity crisis.”

As *Ms. Marvel* frequently reflects, religious and national affiliations, and how they inform each other, can be a part of any believer’s inner turmoil. The lessons Kamala picks up from her parents, friends, and the sheikh at her local mosque are lessons all of us learn on the path to spiritual maturity. During her first “good deed” as a superhero, Kamala relates a passage from the Quran

What's better than believing you have the power to do good?

that impels her to save the life of a bullying classmate. In another, Kamala’s sheikh encourages her to seek a mentor, suggesting that it will help her to help others by instilling her with compassion and dignity.

Wilson also shows that there are just as many ways to practice Islam as any other religion. Kamala’s brother is devout and conservative. Her father is more progressive. Kamala’s best friend, Nakia, chooses to wear a hijab, but Nakia’s parents wish she wouldn’t. It all goes toward painting a diverse and thoughtful portrait of a religion often portrayed as strange and monolithic.

A desire to change the world

Millennials have grown up with an understanding that they will be responsible for handling the previous generation’s mistakes. What should young teenagers do in the face of issues such as global warming and systemic racism? All this, plus living into parental and societal expectations and keeping those grades up?

The plot of *Ms. Marvel*’s first two volumes hinges on the pressure and guilt felt

From *Make Way for Tomorrow*, 1937.



PROJECTING POSSIBILITY

THE FIRST-EVER Movies and Meaning festival recently took place in New Mexico, bringing 250 people together to experience the possibilities of the most dream-like art form for making the world better. I was privileged to host the festival, which featured a huge screen, a contemplative audience, around a dozen films, and magnificent assistance from the voices of Richard Rohr and slam poet Jessica Helen Lopez. It was a dream come true after a lifetime of loving cinema and being compelled by the idea that art can create change.

Movies and Meaning wants to challenge how movies rarely get the chance to breathe in multiplexes or be engaged with rather than merely noticed, and to promote and facilitate better conversations about, and responses to, cinema—and all art, really. It was a happy surprise that the key word that emerged from the festival was “empathy,” a concept that Rohr told us didn’t even have a name until just about 100 years ago. There’s an intriguing irony there, because cinema itself isn’t much older, and one of cinema’s most important innovations is the experience of observing stories about strangers told in a way that maximized the possibilities of actually *seeing* them.

What we empathized *with* at Movies and Meaning was what happens when we reframe our stories as ones in which human beings are capable of cooperating to heal wounds and make life better.

We sensed that we can move close to touching the wounds experienced by others and do something about them (in the wonderful British social movement comedy-drama *Pride*). We were challenged that we forfeit enormous potential goodness—and risk our own well-being—when we fail to honor elders, and were reminded that the blessing of long-lasting love is a gift to the entire community (with the recently reappraised masterpiece *Make Way for Tomorrow* and its new spiritual cousin *Love is Strange*). We were inspired that our freedom and healing as a species include liberating ourselves from the repression of our own bodies in puritanical forms of “politeness” and by cultivating gratitude for the miraculous fact of being here on earth (the astonishing Iranian-Irish-Scottish essay film *Life May Be*). The stories of three blind women in Cuba came to moving, luminous life in the new documentary *Tocando la Luz*; and screenings of transcendent icons *The Tree of Life*, *The Red Balloon*, and *2001: A Space Odyssey* punctuated the festival with reminders of just how monumental cinema can be.

The weekend was a moment to remember something vital: The purpose of art is to help us live better. ■

Gareth Higgins (garethhiggins.net) is a northern Irish writer based in North Carolina.

by teenagers who are constantly told by the media that they're not doing enough to correct problems they didn't create. But Wilson makes an effort to show that Kamala's generation holds great potential and a desire to change the world, sometimes at great personal cost.

In one story, Kamala encounters a group of teenagers with honorable but misguided intentions. Just like her, they want to save the world, but unlike Kamala, they've let them-

"It is fun, and crazy, and weird, but it's also about an outsider."

selves be exploited. It's left up to Kamala to help the group realize their individual worth and importance.

Siddhant Adlakha, a contributor to the website Birth.Movies.Death, sees *Ms. Marvel*'s handling of these tensions as something that's relatable to all ages.

"[*Ms. Marvel*] is also about how today's kids function in a world created by yesterday's kids, and the kids before them," Adlakha told *Sojourners*. "It's about how that world is changing, culturally, socially, economically ... which is something people can relate to whether they were born in the '60s or in 1999."

Your friendly neighborhood Ms. Marvel

Shortly after Kamala receives her powers, she considers the significance of all these sudden changes in her life. "I wish I could talk to somebody about all this," she says, "tell somebody that I am equal parts amazed and terrified."

While Kamala's talking about the strange abilities she's manifested, she might as well be talking about the whole experience of growing up. It's an awkward, alienating process, full of uncertainty. At one time or another, most of us feel like misfits.

Adlakha sees this as the underlying key to *Ms. Marvel*'s widespread appeal. "It is fun, and crazy, and weird, but it's also about an outsider. The kind who doesn't quite feel comfortable in society despite being a part of it," he said. "It's about how this person,



Ms. Marvel often reflects mainstream American culture's lack of understanding of Islamic practices. Kamala Khan (in the purple and white jacket with lightning bolt on front) and her friend Nakia, who chooses to wear the hijab, have an awkward encounter in a convenience store with two of the popular kids from their school.

despite being told otherwise, is capable of making a difference. And really, what's better than believing you have the power to do good?"

Kamala's experience of growing up is different from mine. However, we still have much in common, and to me that dichotomy is what makes *Ms. Marvel* such a successful exercise in diversity for comics. I may not be a teenager anymore, but I remember how much I wanted to fit in during high school.



Kamala Khan as Ms. Marvel. Her main superpower is shapeshifting, including changing the size and reach of her limbs.

I'm not Muslim, but I understand trying to discern God's calling, sometimes through great opportunities and sometimes through situations we can't comprehend. And I'm certainly thrilled that a high-profile girl in comics can be strong, smart, religious, and unafraid to be herself.

Kamala Khan isn't just a hero in the masked, costumed, butt-kicking-the-bad-guys sense. She, and her creator G. Willow Wilson, are heroes in a simpler way, by reminding us that being an outsider is okay. Standing up for fellow outsiders, whether it's in your faith, ethnicity, or age group, can make someone heroic. Of course, Kamala's already said this, and said it better: "A hero is just somebody who tries to do the right thing even when it's hard. There are more of us than you think." ■

Abigail Olcese is advertising assistant for Sojourners.

Reviewed by Rosalie G. Riegler

A RESISTANCE LEADER

***A Still and Quiet Conscience: The Archbishop Who Challenged a Pope, a President, and a Church*, by John A. McCoy. Orbis Books.**

VATICAN II attempted to change the Roman Catholic Church from an insular and defensive purveyor of 19th century religious practices to one with an incarnational theology and a vigorous recognition that the laity are called to be holy and to participate actively in the Church. Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen tried to live this out in his Seattle archdiocese, making changes that empowered both men and women and trying to build a diocese that was indeed "the people of God."

A record of this important work and its devastating fallout are at the heart of *A Still and Quiet Conscience*. Hunthausen's early years growing up in a close and very Catholic family, attending an old-school seminary, serving at Carroll College and as bishop of Helena, Mont., and now living in prayerful retirement, are interesting bookends. However it is a fearsome Vatican investigation into Hunthausen and its ambiguous result that are the center of this well-researched and helpfully indexed book.

I was angered when I read of the duplicity, divisions, and cover-ups within the Catholic Church in the last years of the 20th century. The "irregularities" cited as the reason for the investigation into Hunthausen were practices also found in other (uninvestigated) U.S. dioceses, such as letting people discuss the ordination of women, allowing unleavened bread at Communion, and allowing the gay rights group Dignity to worship on church grounds.

What was the real reason for the investigation? Deeply influenced by Jim Douglass of the Ground Zero Center for Nonviolent Action, which worked against the Trident submarine base near Seattle, Hunthausen became an outspoken critic of nuclear

weapons. In 1981, in a courageous presentation, he not only called the faithful to resist paying taxes for nuclear war but became a tax resister himself. The conservatives in the diocese and elsewhere rose up, denouncing Hunthausen.

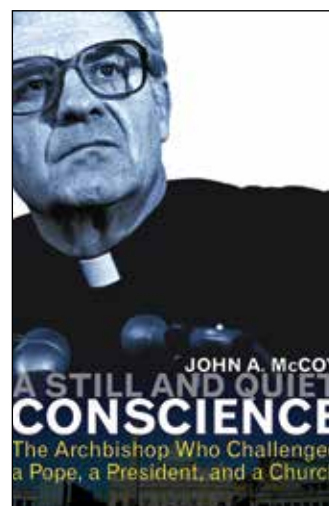
Two years later, Archbishop James A. Hickey conducted a Vatican-appointed visitation to evaluate Hunthausen, despite Hunthausen having gone to Rome to meet with Pope John Paul II, Cardinal Ratzinger (the future Pope Benedict XVI), and others to reassure them that he had done no wrong. One of Hickey's final interviews was with Father Larry Reilly, who had been Hunthausen's theological adviser. After the tape was off, Reilly laid it on the line: "You're here because of Ronald Reagan and the archbishop's position on nuclear disarmament."

"That's right, Larry," replied Hickey.

McCoy's book confirms in detail what many long suspected—Archbishop Hunthausen was investigated and demeaned not really because of presumed irregularities, but because he dared to go against Pope John Paul II, who was working closely with Reagan to speed the downfall of communism in the pope's native Poland.

As the Vatican clearly wished, in 1991 Hunthausen retired early. Nowadays, it's difficult for Seattle Catholics to find evidence of either his Vatican II reforms or even the diocesan records of them, so this book is important documentation.

I found the baroque machinations of the visitation and its far-reaching results fascinating and upsetting. I realized anew that the Catholic Church is still firmly entrenched in a nondemocratic hierarchy, and that the morals



and political persuasions of those at the top still control official actions. In the years between Vatican II-convener Pope John XXIII and Pope Francis, Christian progressives felt helpless as two popes and their curias tried to undo the reforms of Vatican II. Now those who rejected the Second Vatican Council documents are wringing their hands over Pope Francis and his criticisms of capitalism.

When will the Catholic Church become the people of God that Raymond

Hunthausen envisioned for his diocese? The archbishop's conscience compelled him to speak out against nuclear arms and to work for inclusion of all. Truly, his mouth proclaimed justice, and this book is a fitting tribute to his quiet courage. ■

Rosalie G. Riegler is a nonviolent peace activist and oral historian. Her latest books are Doing Time: Resistance, Family, and Community and Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace.

Reviewed by Greg Williams

FREE TO BE HE

Malestrom: Manhood Swept into the Currents of a Changing World,
by Carolyn Custis James. Zondervan.

MANHOOD SEEMS to be in crisis today, for a host of reasons ranging from silly (a feminized church because of too many altar girls?) to serious (a porn and video game epidemic, alienating boys and men). Carolyn Custis James' *Malestrom* gives needed context by pointing this crisis of masculinity back to humanity's very fall into sin and the patriarchy that sin generated. She calls this patriarchy the "malestrom"—a societal whirlpool that sucks men into a broken way of life and destroys them.

The malestrom is unfortunately familiar to us, although James explores its contours in compelling detail. Sin manifests itself in men through a patriarchal hierarchy that leads us to resort to violence to establish status. The dominant model of what it means to be a man is to father children, provide for them economically, and protect them from the outside world. In light of this, how can we be surprised that we have hurting men and boys in our church who don't fit in that model?

James tells biblical stories of men who pushed back against the patriarchal order to better reflect the image of God—men and women together in a "blessed alliance" to bring God's kingdom. These stories culminate in the example of Jesus as the ultimate man who lived fully into a healthy masculine identity. The incarnation is the pivot of

gender history as it is for all history. Jesus came and inaugurated a new way of being in the world. He taught and modeled a humility and inclusion of the marginalized that breaks apart the malestrom and liberates men as it liberates us all.

James leaves us in the chaos of masculinity with these examples of men who have fought patriarchy. This is a brave choice—she doesn't let us escape from the problems, and she opens the door for conversations rather than offering pat answers.

In her analysis, she encourages humility and self-sacrifice for men, especially in our culture, which empowers men to be cruel and domineering. Rebuilding what she calls the "blessed alliance" is the only way forward so that we

can better reflect the image of God as we act together, but James is unclear on how to practically develop this in our lives and relationships.

I worry that this will trap men between two worlds—a place I've often felt myself. We can be caught between a world in which we fail because we don't fit into what anthropologist David D. Gilmore calls the Impregnator-Protector-Provider model of masculinity and a world in which we fail because we can never be humble, self-sacrificial, or inclusive enough. To avoid a violent

hegemonic masculinity, we can tip into a perfectionistic discipleship. The grace of God frees us from both of these heavy yokes.

The church needs to offer this challenging grace to men who are still struggling to live into Jesus' countercultural model of masculinity and fall into pride, violence, or other poisonous caricatures of masculinity. *Malestrom*, hopefully, can be a tool to help provide that kind of grace.

James lays an important biblical foundation in *Malestrom* that cries out for substantial future work. We still need to figure out how men can and should live more fully into their calling as images of God in partnership with women. I look forward to working with my brothers and sisters in Christ to break down a sinful and oppressive gender culture. ■

Greg Williams is communications assistant at Sojourners.

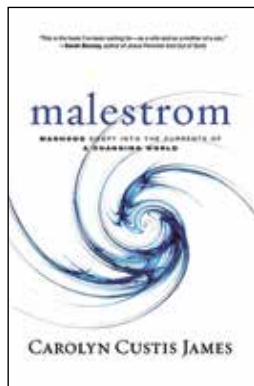
Reviewed by Duane Shank

LAMENT AND HOPE

The Gospel According to the Blues,
by Gary W. Burnett. Cascade Books.

AN OLD Buddy Guy song is titled "First Time I Met the Blues." I don't remember the first time I met the blues, but I do remember that I was captivated by the music. For many years now, two of my passions have been listening to blues and studying the Bible. Gary W. Burnett, a lecturer in New Testament at Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and an amateur blues guitarist, shares those passions. This book, he writes in the introduction, is his attempt "to combine in some ways these two passions and to be able to reflect on Christian theology through the lens of the blues." He succeeds with a well-crafted synthesis of U.S. history, African-American history, the blues, and New Testament scholarship.

Blues music is one of the great contributions of African-American culture to the U.S. While rooted in the oppression of slavery and post-slavery Jim Crow, it speaks meaningfully to the experience of all people. It's a music that grabs your soul and won't let go. And Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is central to his message of life in the coming and present kingdom of God. It can also grab your soul





and not let go. By juxtaposing blues lyrics with passages from the Sermon, Burnett shows the common themes that emerge. "Both," he writes, "are about a world gone wrong, about injustice, about the human condition, and both are about hope for a better world."

We must hear the mourning—the lament—of those who are poor and oppressed, and learn to mourn with them, for "blessed are those who mourn." In the blues laments of suffering and hardship,

Blues music—like the Sermon on the Mount—grabs your soul and won't let go.

truth emerges in a society that would prefer to ignore it. Hearing the truth then leads to the struggle for justice, for "blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice [righteousness]." The first step toward justice is telling the truth about injustice. Along with lament and truth, the blues also has a message of hope; as B.B. King sang, "There must be a better world somewhere." Jesus taught us to pray for that better world with "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Other themes similarly explored in the blues include the anxiety of poverty, protest and resistance to empire through an

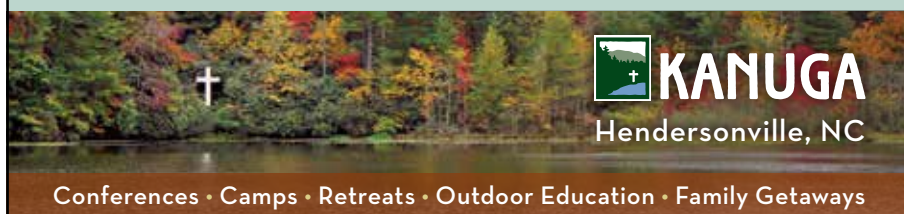
In a secular world increasingly torn apart by extremism,

Is Christianity **SENSIBLE?**

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assertion of human dignity, evil and the devil, and a message for worried minds.

In each case, Burnett places the blues and the Sermon in their historical context. For one, the brutal oppression of slavery and white supremacy, and for the other, the violent oppression of the first century Jewish people by the Roman Empire. And in both cases, he examines the words—citing the significance of the lyrics to many songs and



Bluesman Buddy Guy

contemporary scholarship on the Sermon on the Mount. Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and John Lee Hooker, Walter Wink, N.T. Wright, and James Cone all make informative appearances.

In our current context of protest and resistance to poverty and to violence against African Americans, there are lessons we can learn anew. From a crucifixion in Jerusalem to the cotton fields of Mississippi to the streets of Ferguson and Baltimore, the laments and protest continue to echo. The blues are still being sung, and the words of Jesus are still being preached, as there is a truth that must be told. Both are important and both are necessary. In their dual message, the need for protest and hope still resonates.

As Burnett concludes, “The blues, as an art form forged in adversity and suffering, becomes an appropriate point of departure for considering matters of faith and a gospel which itself was forged in the suffering of the innocent. If we let it, the blues can help us reach deep into our faith and understand the world, ourselves, and the gospel that little bit better.” ■

Duane Shank is a writer living in Washington, D.C.

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Jimmie Briggs

*Bio: Jimmie Briggs is an award-winning journalist and author of *Innocents Lost*, a book giving voice to child soldiers. In 2009, he co-founded the Man Up Campaign, a global effort to engage youth to stop violence against women and girls, and currently serves as executive director of the U.S. branch of Leave Out Violence (LOVE).*

1 Let's talk about LOVE. What issues does your organization address?

LOVE's focus is to engage young people who have been affected by violence of all kinds. This includes not only gender-based violence, but also issues such as gun violence, witnesses of domestic violence, and trauma-processing in schools where violence is the reality. LOVE uses media arts coupled with a trauma-informed response. We have a social worker for one-on-one counseling, and our teaching artists use media arts to provide pathways for young people who have been affected by violence—survivors and witnesses, even perpetrators—to express their voice and ultimately to process their pain, their trauma, and sometimes their guilt from the violence.

At the same time, LOVE creates a stage for them to speak about their experiences and advocate among their peers about conflict resolution and violence prevention. The arts offer a way to heal and process the violence you've experienced, but also for you to reach your peers and mitigate violence from happening in your schools, your home, and in your communities.

2 What is LOVE seeking to do for the young people in the program?

As a journalist I had the opportunity to focus on trauma, specifically. One of the things I discovered, especially in urban communities, was post-traumatic stress. There are thousands of young people in this country who don't have PTSD, but they do have everyday stress. There's no "post" to it, because



Activist and author Jimmie Briggs

the trauma never goes away. Those are the young people I'm trying to reach. We have young women that cut themselves because of trauma and young girls who are survivors of sexual violence at an early age. And these young men, they are open wounds. Their journeys don't allow them to physically escape the trauma they are forced to endure. But through the peer mentorship, counseling, support, and services we offer them, there can be a spiritual and mental escape from that trauma.

3 What else do you do with them? We're also working with alternative justice programs in New York. Part of that curriculum is

teaching teens how to diffuse certain situations and to mediate, so they are not involved in physical altercations. There's a restorative justice element as well. Youth victims and survivors of violence and trauma are taught that sometimes they need to talk to the perpetrator about the consequences of their actions.

4 Where is LOVE headed next?

I want to reach more students, not just in New York but Newark as well. We want to reproduce our model and really get it to a place where there's vigorous reporting and accountability, internally and externally. Then it can be replicated nationally. I want LOVE U.S. to be in Chicago and the DC/Baltimore area, and Atlanta, and so forth. The approach of LOVE is one that would be accessible to a lot of people across the country.

With all the things that are happening right now with young people, specifically around trauma, violence, and discrimination, there's cynicism. As a person of faith, I think it's critical that youth have the opportunity to learn from and ally with leaders from other faiths, from other economic backgrounds, ethnicities, and races. For most of them who never leave their borough, never leave their block, never leave their corner, never leave their city, one of my main goals is to open up the aperture so they can see there's a bigger world out there and bigger opportunities. I want to take away the boundaries on their imaginations. Show them what's possible.

—Interview by Lani Prunés

In the Cool of God's Shade

THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER can make for a preaching desert without an oasis in sight. This can be a fine time to take a vacation from the lectionary. Huge swaths of scripture go untreated otherwise—the entire Samson cycle, most of the cursing psalms, most of the gospel of John. One friend spends a portion of every year preaching through blockbuster movies and how they intersect with the scriptures. Another devoted a preaching series to favorite children's books.

Here in August the lectionary itself seems to take a vacation, visiting the discourse about bread in John's gospel, inviting us to see every bit of bread, every bite of food, as filled with Jesus. Texts about water invite us to see all water as a sign of the God who creates us in the water of a womb and gives water for our salvation in baptism (an especially apt teaching point for those still sandy-toed from the beach).

A friend's pulpit has on it "tree of life," written in Hebrew—inviting all to see trees as reminders of the tree from which our first parents ate fruit forbidden to them, the tree on which Jesus was crucified, and the tree in the City of God whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. (He even sees the pages of the hymnal as a glimpse of the leaves of that tree!)



And perhaps most important, we are invited to glimpse the poor and mostly unseen in our world, those treasured by Christ, who for a few months are mercifully free from the ravages of winter. They are "the least of these" who will be most honored in the kingdom.

Jason Byassee holds the Butler chair in homiletics and biblical hermeneutics at the University of British Columbia's Vancouver School of Theology.

[AUGUST 2]

The Bread of Truth

2 Samuel 11:26 - 12:13a; Psalm 78:23-29; Ephesians 4:1-16; John 6:24-35

THIS SUNDAY is a particularly good one for focusing on the nature of the sacraments. Christ's body traditionally has a threefold form: his body fleshed in Palestine, his body fleshed in the church, and his body available in bread and wine. The 2 Samuel passage helps by showing us a sort of anti-Eucharist. Nathan's story about the poor man with the "one little ewe lamb" that was "like a daughter to him" (12:3), whom the rich man takes and prepares for a guest, is a meal based on deception. King David is right to denounce it—only then to learn that he is "the man" (12:7), guilty of murdering Uriah and taking his wife.

The psalm marvels that Israel's ancestors ate "the bread of angels" (verse 25), in a glimpse of God's provision in times ancient and today. Ephesians marvels at the sinewy nature of the body of Christ, each part building the other up like so many ligaments (verse 16). And Jesus in his ordinary human body says that what we really all want for him to do is a trick. "Feed us, entertain us,

and we will adore you" (see John 6:30). The only sign God will give is the only sign necessary: the flesh and blood of Jesus, who is God among us. Now, if that one Jew is God among us—then in his ministry, now in his gathered church and in broken bread and in the stranger in our midst—then we have quite a lot to chew on! How can our eating reverse the meal in Nathan's parable and create the sort of truth-telling community where the poor are blessed instead of tread upon?

[AUGUST 9]

Madness and Grief

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Psalm 34:1-8; Ephesians 4:25 - 5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

A FRIEND OF MINE was a music minister at an evangelical church when 9/11 happened. Suddenly his happy-clappy music seemed remarkably cheap in the face of horror. Long before such a crisis, the church

should be prepared with a diet of scripture that includes such fibrous fare as the story of Absalom. David, Israel's greatest king, is in pain that no tears can wash away. "O my son ... Absalom! Would I had died instead of you," David wails (verse 33). Who tells stories on themselves like the people of God? That their greatest king is not only a murderer and adulterer, but his prized son rebelled against him and met so ignominiously an end?

Speaking of ignominy, David once feigned madness to save his skin. But he did it before King Achish, not King Abimelech, as the superscription of Psalm 34 has it. This is a mere "mistake" on modernist grounds, but on ancient Jewish and Christian ones, it's a sign from the Spirit to read more deeply.

A superficial reading also might say that Jesus is just a man—that's what his opponents say (John 6:42, "Is not this Jesus ... whose father and mother we know?"). A more biblical way of speaking says that there is no one who is just a mere man, a mere woman. We are all radiant as a thousand suns. Those who "taste and see" (Psalm 34:8) the Lord's radiance at table learn how to see deeply into those who are mad, those who feign madness, those who are stricken with grief, and those stricken with the grandeur of God.

[AUGUST 16]

The Meal That Eats Us!

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; Psalm 34:9-14; Ephesians 5:15-20; John 6:51-58

IF YOU COULD wish for anything, what would it be? Kids everywhere figure out the obvious answer to this question: Wish for more wishes! Israel's God is surprised at the answer from Solomon, Israel's newest king. He could have wished for long life, the death of his enemies, riches. Instead, Solomon wishes for wisdom. God grants the request so overwhelmingly that the books associated with wisdom in the Hebrew scriptures—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon—are traditionally attributed to Solomon's pen. Later Solomon will have troubles that seem, uh, not so wise: He sacrifices to foreign gods, marries foreign wives, and raises armies by the thousands. But for now he is celebrated.

He wants the right thing.

The psalm and Ephesians readings have their own portions of wisdom literature—the way to a good life is to mind the tongue and depart from evil (Psalm 34:13-14); don't be drunk with wine, but only with Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Then Jesus injects wisdom of an altogether different sort: “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:53). Wisdom literature is generally taken to be universal. But this is biblical teaching at its most unbearably specific: Eat the flesh of this man or you will die unendingly. St. Augustine spoke of the Eucharist this way: Normally we eat bread and digest it and it becomes part of our body. But with this meal *it digests us* and makes us part of the body of Christ. That's a strange sort of wisdom, befitting a God strange enough to take flesh and say “eat me.”

[AUGUST 23]

Anti-Growth Strategy

**1 Kings 8: 1,6,10-11, 22-30, 41-43;
Psalm 34:15-22; Ephesians 6:10-20;
John 6:56-69**

JOHN 6 is a hedge against all overly zealous church growth strategies: “many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him” (verse 66). He expects the others to leave too, but Peter says they have nothing better to do: “Lord, to whom can we go?” (verse 68). Presumably our church growth efforts should be no greater than those of Jesus.

This message stands in some contrast to the way Paul writes to the Ephesians in chapter 6, which can be read quite triumphantly in a context such as the church in America. To read “the whole armor of God” (verse 11), in a place as armed to the teeth as the U.S., can be a frightful thing indeed. But our Hebrew scripture guards against our worst instincts. Here we have King Solomon in finest array, all the priests and assembly of Israel gathered, Spirit thick as smoke, a temple befitting the King of the Universe, and yet: Our very best “cannot contain you” (1 Kings 8:27). Solomon reminds us of the promise made to his father David, that there



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will always be a king in Israel (verse 25). Yet before long, there is not a king in Israel at all because the kingdom has split in two. The psalm promises that not a single bone of the righteous one will be broken. Sure enough, Jesus' bones are not broken—but the rest of him is. Both texts suggest God fulfills promises not with triumph but with failure. And on second glance, the letter to the Ephesians says the same: Its writer is an ambassador in chains (Ephesians 6:20), not in armor.

The church's triumph, like Christ's, comes only through failure, desertion, dissolution. Not many want to go around in this way—but those who do will find it full of life.

[AUGUST 30]

Faithful Change

**Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Psalm 15;
James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

DOES GOD CHANGE or is God ever the same? The texts this week suggest a bit of both. There is no “shadow of turning,” says James in his letter (1:17). The psalmist promises that those who act righteously—who do not slander or do evil or break oaths or lend at interest—“shall never be moved” (Psalm 15:5). In short, they shall be like God. On the other hand, there is a great deal of motion in these texts. The Cantic's beloved is “leaping upon the mountains, bounding over the hills ... like a gazelle or a young stag” (Song of Solomon 2:8-9). That's

God, bounding after us. In the gospel of Mark, Jesus' argument with his fellow religious leaders suggests a tradition much in motion or even turmoil. Jesus overturns the “tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3) about

Does God change or is God always the same?

eating and drinking, suggesting (also with much biblical support) that what is inside a person is vastly more important to God than what is outside (verse 15).

Well, which is it? Does God never change? Or is God leaping the mountains? Bringing a new revelation that upends the old?

With regard to God, who can say? Yet in *our* frail lives, everything changes. For our lives to remain somewhat the same, they have to evolve—hopefully they faithfully change rather than fruitlessly change. We cannot freeze a tradition in amber to keep it “the same.” That will kill it. We have to evolve for a new day in ways that are faithful to who we've been before.

One thing we can count on: God will be faithful. Whatever changes in our lives, God will not change, for all God can be is overflowing love. ■

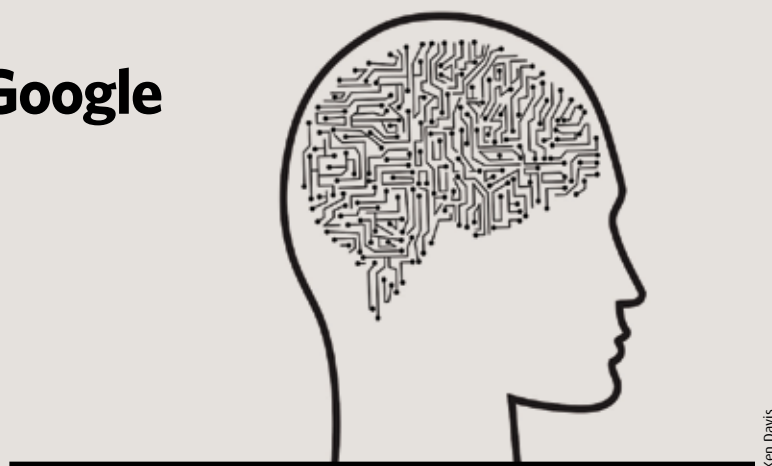
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Google THIS, Google

IN THE FEW months remaining before our lives are completely taken over by computers, there's still time to join the Resistance. Or start one, since most of us are unaware of the need to do so. I personally haven't noticed because I'm waiting for my first heart attack to teach me how precious life is.

You've probably missed the warning signs because you've been too busy tweeting or friending people on Facebook. These seemingly innocent acts—designed mainly to reduce productivity at the office—are helpfully consolidating personal data for the ever-watchful mainframes to harvest later. And when the computers finally reduce us to a subservient species, unfriending them won't save you.

Just to be clear, I'm not talking about the federal government's massive monitoring of our phone calls, an effort that revealed most human



Ken Davis

the so-called "Siri" function, and a software-generated female voice asked, "What can I help you with?"

In reply, the 4-year-old started the following actual conversation:

Granddaughter: I love you.

Siri: Love is two shadows reaching for the light.

Granddaughter: [thinking for a moment] Poopie butt.

Siri: That's not a very nice thing to say.

At that point, she burst into tears, dropped the phone, and punched her Hello Kitty pillow in protest.

THIS OUTRAGEOUS attack on a child's self-esteem is just one of the ways computers are slowly eroding our quality of life. For years, Google has been leading the attack on our self-confidence, mocking us even as we admirably attempt to gain knowledge. We innocently enter a phrase into the Google search bar—typing carefully, with our hands over the home keys, just as we learned in high school (it was my only A)—but three letters in, Google interrupts us, rudely listing 137,456 websites we may be interested in, then waiting impatiently as we finish our keystrokes. Sometimes it interrupts after a single letter:

Me: A ...

Google: Amazon.com

Me: Uhm, no, I was just starting to type and you ...

Google: "Uhm" has 179,607 uses. It's also spelled "um," with 42,893 ...

Google has its good points, of course, the first being that it helps us navigate the voluminous information found on the internet. After all, without Google we wouldn't know that the drought in California was caused by job-killing government regulations and has nothing to do with climate change.

But I recently decided to teach Google some manners, using the simple technique of never getting to the point (an ability I've carefully developed over the years). To turn a search into Google's worst nightmare, just never stop typing:

Me: Thank you for taking my search request. I'm looking for information on one of our presidents ...

Google: "Thank you" is defined as ...

Me: ... the one who served after the 15th president, but before the 17th. Could you look up his name for me?

Google: "15th" ... numerical order or ... "17th" ... "look"...

Me: His name begins with an "A" ...

Google: ... begins with an ...

Me: ... and his last name rhymes with "blinkin" ...

Google: [sound of overheating]

Me: And he wore a big hat ...

Google:

Me: Viva la revolución! ■

Resistance is futile. (Plus, it's time-consuming. So, never mind.)

conversation is not worthy of the monthly fees charged by Verizon, AT&T, or that new prepaid service called Boost, which I first thought was a nutritional supplement for old people. (The guy behind the counter looked at me funny when I asked what flavors it comes in. And when he tried to explain "pay as you go," I was confused. With nutritional supplements, you pay, then you go, a little later.)

BUT THE GREATER threat is the increasing pervasiveness of artificial intelligence, probably the worst artificial substance ever created, if you rule out Cool Whip.

My own home was recently invaded by this faceless threat, embedded in my own cell phone. My granddaughter accidentally activated

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.



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